

A PASTORAL CARE MODEL OF CARING FOR WIDOWS

By

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## ABSTRACT

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Butler Memorial United Methodist Church (BMUMC), Bronx, NY has embraced *A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows*. By doing this they are practicing the biblical mandate . . . “you took care of me” (Matt 25:36 NRSV). A servant of Jesus, the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 said, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” While these passages encompass many areas—financial, social, spiritual, emotional, physical, and other—the Pastor and leaders are bringing awareness to the need of caring for widows, that they are no longer neglected or isolated in their community of faith. During the demonstration project, I attempted to describe the plight of widows among the congregation by mobilizing a planning group of widows to form a supportive community. The planning group and I have demonstrated that pastoral care is a partnership between clergy and laity. This was intentional throughout the project and the fruits of this effort is a printed pamphlet and a formal widow’s ministry—“Heart to Heart Widow’s Ministry”—to be used by the congregation.

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## INTRODUCTION

What would it look like to have *A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows* (see Appendix A) at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church (BMUMC), Bronx, New York, where everyone is in partnership addressing the needs of widows? My concept of “a pastoral care model” implies there is a guiding process that is designed to provide continuous support, encouragement and long-term care for persons in need, in this project, widows. My approach is to provide pastoral care and be intentional about the kinds of care being given to widows. There are well meaning persons in churches offering their best efforts by caring for others. Someone said pastoral care is an “art” and it can be learned. Wesley M. Teterud wrote, “If Christians desire to please the Lord, and they see from Scripture that caring for widows is one way to accomplish this desire, then people can learn how to carry out this biblical responsibility.”<sup>1</sup>

John Patton wrote in *Pastoral Care an Essential Guide*, that it is “based theologically on the Christian affirmation that God created humankind for relationship with God and with God’s other creatures.”<sup>2</sup> I am certain that God affirms widowhood in the creation of human conditions. Therefore, we are all caregivers and capable of caring for one another as Christians. The best pastoral care is seen in the biblical narratives of

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<sup>1</sup> Wesley M. Teterud, *Caring for Widows: You & Your Church Can Make a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), xvi.

<sup>2</sup> John Patton, *Pastoral Care: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 1.

Jesus' ministry as he cared for the least in the community, which included widows. One of the titles given to Jesus in the Bible was an image of a "Shepherd." He was the Shepherd, who cared for his lost sheep. In this project the image of the Shepard is an ordained pastor, who is not alone in this caring relationship—an equal relationship between pastors and laity.

I am reminded in the Book of Acts, when some of the leaders felt "It is not right that we should neglect the Word of God in order to wait on tables" (Acts 6:2 NRSV).<sup>3</sup> As an ordained deacon, my preaching the word and facilitating the Bible Study groups ought not to stop others from taking on the role of reaching out and caring for others on behalf of the congregation. Interpreting the Acts narrative this project puts ownership of caring for widows on the entire community of faith. Cheryl Erwin writes, "The church that takes its biblical responsibility for the care and support of widows seriously will, in obedience to our Lord's plan, prepare, and implement an ongoing ministry to them after bereavement."<sup>4</sup>

This project has portrayed how widows are victimized by benign neglect and subtle evasion. To make right the concerns of the widows in Butler Church I recruited widows for a planning group to address the needs of widows, and to bring awareness to the pastor and leaders in the congregation to care for widows.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted all biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>4</sup> Cheryl Jean Erwin, "The Theological Foundation for Soul Care of Widows," [http://www.reformation-today.org/issues/articles/The\\_Theological\\_Foundation\\_For\\_Soul\\_Care\\_Of\\_Widows.pdf](http://www.reformation-today.org/issues/articles/The_Theological_Foundation_For_Soul_Care_Of_Widows.pdf) (accessed November 10, 2015), 1.

I encountered the most difficult experience in my life in the death of my husband of 39 years. Together we had our struggles; but it was a life of social, spiritual and emotional stability. The six months prior to his death were very challenging. I had accepted my husband's pending death due to the seriousness of his illness. We spent days going to the doctor's office and long stays in the hospital together. As I reflect back over the years, we celebrated our final holidays (Christmas and New Year's Day) well and the thoughts of those days give me peace. At his funeral service, church members were present and supportive of my loss. In the days and weeks to follow, I mourned my loss and I became a grieving widow. As I processed my emotions, I felt alone and invisible in a community of believers. Over time, I observed other widows, and out of our shared experiences, I sensed isolation, abandonment and neglect that resonated with me.

I further observed other widows going through experiences of invisibility. They had withdrawn themselves from church fellowship and had no involvement in the life of the congregation. I had observed that some widows had never returned to church after their husband had died. I was told by one widow, "Infrequently and more often than not widows might get a phone call several weeks or months" after the funeral of their loved one from another woman in the congregation and more seldom, from the pastor. She felt this was unacceptable for a church. If the call did occur in my experience it was never about, "How are you coping with your grief?" Rather, the very question that would have eased the emotional pain was avoided. Instead, it was to encourage me to return to a life of normalcy; if there was such a thing for a new widow. Of course, I realized it was a way of showing concern and an attempt to show compassion. Yet, it lacked the intentional care and the fundamental skills of "listening" and "empathy" for someone

who is grieving. Teterud wrote, “I have also observed that church people may grow insensitive to the long-term needs of widows and unintentionally neglect them.”<sup>5</sup> But I believe there needs to be some understanding of the grieving that connects the widow and the caregiver’s actions in a response that sends a message that “you are not alone.”

In a recent article by Bill Sherman titled, “New Ministry Helps Churches Meet Needs of Widows”, he interviewed Kathi Baab.

Kathi Baab was in a daze after losing her husband to cancer. When she was invited to be part of a new program aimed at supporting widows, she wasn't that interested. "I have a large family, very dedicated and caring," she said. "I thought I'd go, but I didn't think much of it. The initial meeting was seven or eight women, and I was just blown away," she said. "Every wall, every barrier came down. We were very transparent in sharing our pain and suffering, and what we had been through. It was like we went from zero to 180 in two minutes."

Baab is one of several dozen widows in Stand in the Gap Widows; a new ministry that helps churches meet the emotional and practical needs of widows in their congregations.

"It's a population that is suffering, and suffering silently," said Buddy Stone, Stand in the Gap founder. "We're uncovering an incredibly lonely and hurting population." Stone said his organization conducted interviews with more than 60 widows and found they share some common issues.

"Our interviews found that widows need two things: practical help and a listening heart," he said. "And that needs to be another widow. Our research says if you're not a widow, you just don't get it."

“Widows suffer from painful loneliness,” he said. “A typical widow will lose 65 percent of her friendships. As one widow put it,” he said, “it's awkward to be around a widow, and people don't like awkward.” He said widows all reported that support from their churches waned in a few months.

"Many churches are doing wonderful things for their widows," he said, but for the most part, "we have done a poor job at defending the widows." Few things are as clear in scripture as the biblical imperative to care for widows, he said.

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<sup>5</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, xvi.

The widow's program started just over a year ago and has involved 52 widows in 13 groups from eight churches. It is being expanded into the Oklahoma City area, and other cities.

"I intend, over the next three years, to present this program to all 7,000 churches in Oklahoma," Stone said. "I'm not trying to sell it. I'm just saying, 'Here it is.' "

The program presents a methodical approach to helping widows that starts with identifying the widows in a congregation. Many churches have no idea who they are, Stone said.

From there, the program trains people—called widows helpers—to provide practical help in areas of home, car and yard maintenance, finding dependable service people, getting sound financial advice and other things.

Widows will not ask for help, so the program ensures that they are called quarterly and asked what they need.

The program also ensures that widows are contacted by the church regularly, on holidays and on the anniversary of their husband's death.

"They want to be remembered, and they want their husbands to be remembered," Stone said.

The program sets up support groups of widows that meet regularly to talk and pray. Sister Mary Clare Buthod, program manager who sets up the groups, said widows typically don't like to talk about their pain and try to cover it up.

"It's devastating to them," she said. "When they are able to talk about their hurts, great healing comes about and freedom from the pain. And they make friends and have fun," she said.

Virginia Chrisco, at a widows' support meeting Tuesday in a midtown home, said, "I have found we can share experiences that we couldn't share with anyone else "We've had the same trauma. We can unload on one another," she said.<sup>6</sup>

“A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows,” was birthed as a partnership ministry. Early in my ministry as a lay person preparing for ministry in the church and as

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<sup>6</sup> Bill Sherman, “New Ministry Helps Churches Meet Needs of Widows,” [http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/religion/new-ministry-helps-churches-meet-needs-of-widows/article\\_342f4b98-f594-54b4-90c7-209c5e1d6846.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/religion/new-ministry-helps-churches-meet-needs-of-widows/article_342f4b98-f594-54b4-90c7-209c5e1d6846.html) (accessed 11 November 2015).

an ordained deacon, I recognized I needed tools to equip myself so that the entire congregation would foster (support) a caring community for one another, including widows. I began the process of educating myself biblically, spiritually, emotionally, and socially on the needs of widows so that a pastoral care ministry could become a reality. I enrolled in two Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training programs, at Bellevue Medical Center and the Veteran Administration, both in New York City, completing six units of CPE. I subsequently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) in New York City. This project is a continuation of my journey for professional development and spiritual growth as a widow, a Board Certified Chaplain and pastoral caregiver discerning the needs of all widows.

In recent years, I have observed that the number of widows was increasing at Butler Church, which is consistent with the fact that more females are in worship than males on any given Sunday morning in most congregations. Cheryl Jean Erwin, in her work “The Theological Foundation for Soul Care of Widows,” quoted Dr. Larry Overstreet and Deborah Carr, and wrote, “The number of widows is one of the fastest growing groups within the church and our society today. According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately one out of ten women over the age of 17 is a widow. It should be noted that these statistics were recorded before September 11, 2001, and the resultant wars in Iraq and Afghanistan . . . “More than 900,000 adults are widowed each year in the United States, and nearly three quarters of them are over age 65.”<sup>7</sup> Other statistics shows similar patterns. According to the Widow’s Hope organization the United States Census in 2000 reported,

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<sup>7</sup> Erwin, “The Theological Foundation,” 1.



Almost half the women over 65 years of age in the United States are widows. About 7 in 10 of these women live alone. In recent years the average American woman's expected lifespan has increased to eighty or more. However, the societal systems in place for caring for the elderly have not changed at the same rapid pace leaving many widows in poverty. ....The organization also cited the Social Security Administration 2005 report. One Social Security Administration report shows that for the past thirty or more years the rate of poverty among elderly widows is consistently three to four times higher than elderly married women.<sup>8</sup>

While this project has identified 12-15 widows for the planning group there are others widows who remains invisible and anonymous. I prayerfully believe these widows need to make themselves visible to the pastor and leaders of the congregation so that they are not alone.

In the larger context of doing ministry, women have always demonstrated an active role in the caring ministry as missionaries in charge of home visitation ministries and the like. But in doing ministry they have not addressed this personal need—grieving the loss of a loved one—like Kathi Baab in the interview. She was reluctant to participate in a support group.

While looking at the issues locally, Richard H. Gentler, the Director of the Center on Aging and Older-Adult Ministries for the General Board of Disciples of the United Methodist Church (UMC), reported these statistics, regarding marital status, that

More than half (55%) of older non-institutional adults lived with their spouse in 2000. Older men are much more likely to be married than older women: 73% of men, compared with 41% of women. Since women have a longer life expectancy than men (79.7% years at birth for women, compared with 74.3 years for men) and men often marry younger women, nearly half (45%) of all older women are widows, with more than four

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<sup>8</sup> Widow's Hope, "These are the Statistics," <http://www.widowshope.org/first-steps/these-are-the-statistics/> (accessed December 1, 2015).

times as many widows (8.5 million) as widowers (2 million). Only 28.8% of women 75 years or older lived with a spouse in 2000.<sup>9</sup>

Laurence J. Kotlikoff, Philip Moeller, and Paul Solman in their book, *Get What's Yours, The Secrets to Maxing out Your Social Security*, wrote “About 10 million widows and widowers aged 65 and older were receiving monthly survivors benefits in 2013. Of these, 80 percent were awarded to women.”<sup>10</sup> The authors also pointed out the “hard realities” widows are facing. The authors wrote:

1. Widowhood is a woman's issue.
2. The benefits paid to widows, particularly older ones, are crucial to avoiding years of poverty or something close to it.
3. Changing patterns of marriage and divorce benefits in the future.
4. Rising labor-force participation rates for women, however, and, generally, rising wages as well, mean that women increasingly will be better able to fend for themselves in retirement, including receiving growing benefits as compared with those received by men.
5. And yet, ironically, despite their rising earning profiles, women who marry increasingly face raw deals when their husbands die.<sup>11</sup>

If these facts are indeed true, the Social Security Administration (SSA) tops the many institutions that wreak havoc in the lives of widows. Since its “enactment in the 1930s the rules regarding women were shaped by men, thinking about what would

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<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Gentzler, *The Graying of the Church, A Leader's Guide for Older-Adult Ministry in the UMC* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2002), 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Laurence J. Kotlikoff, Philip Moeller, and Paul Solman, *Get What's Yours: The Secrets to Maxing out Social Security* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 165.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

happen to their predominately nonworking wives when the men died.”<sup>12</sup> In a male dominated culture, this is an example of systemic injustice and inequality against widows, who are struggling to survive on meager benefits from the SSA, and you only receive the \$225 dollars maximum as survival death benefit. Such injustice presents an opportunity for a pastoral care ministry. With some planning the church can provide a seminar and a workshop for widows, to educate themselves widows regarding benefits and entitlements as resources of care regarding finances and other issues.

Nonetheless, the above statistics further challenges the Church, its pastor and its widows to identifying those in the congregation and seeks to care for the unknown widows so that they engage in meaningful conversations addressing the social structure that disrupts life in general. It further challenges the wider community that those institutions are systematically denying the poor on the bases of ageism, sexism, and gender relationships.

The health problems widows have are often ignored and widows often want to deal with them alone because as time passes on friends, family and others are absent in their lives. Emotional and physical health becomes a serious issue leading to professional help beyond this self-help project. Julie A. Dickison, Psy.D. writes in her article, “Depression—A Normal Health Problem,” about that

Betty has been having problems getting to sleep or wakes up “way too early.” She has been interested in bridge club, knitting...Nothing seems to matter anymore. She’s forgetting little things, like where her car keys are...And she’s starting to feel guilty about the little things that previously did not make a difference. Betty lost her husband three years ago. She misses him every day, but feels that she has done a good job dealing with his loss and the huge change she had to make. All the things he used to take care of and all the little kindnesses he extended every day—these

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 171.

things Betty remembers, but now does for herself. She had worked hard all her life and considers herself a strong person who grew up in a strong and independent family, handing down that strength to her own children (who are now settled in other states). She takes medicine for her arthritis and diabetes, but she doesn't believe any medicine is going to help this—it's normal to feel this way when you're older.

Betty isn't alone, but these feelings are actually signs of major depression, which is a very treatable condition . . . Depression is a hard thing to handle alone. It can result from losses like a death or changes in independence, economic stress, chronic illness.<sup>13</sup>

Interpreting the realities, widows are overwhelmed as they experience various stages of grief. Based on Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's stages of grief, in what I am calling an inventory of emotional struggles: shock/denial, confusion, anger/hurt, bargaining, depression/isolation and acceptance/recovery. In this project, widows were willing to name their emotional and social struggles. As pastoral care givers we need to identify and be able to understand the stages when they are experienced by widows. It is important that the church take caring for widows be serious in its planning and implementation to provide training for support group leaders.

Patton wrote, "My concern here is to suggest that an ongoing experience of learning to care is important for every caring community...The lay person, who is volunteering their service be grounded in a didactic component, with reading and lectures on topics relevant to human problems or to the personal and spiritual development of the participants,"<sup>14</sup> in this context widows. Teterud writes, "To properly care for those

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<sup>13</sup> Julie A. Dickison, "Depression—A Normal Health Problem," *Agenda: Newsletter of Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* no. 95, April 2001, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context*, 106.

experiencing grief, a clear working knowledge of the nature of grief, of how to manage grief, and sensitivity toward widows experiencing grief are vital.”<sup>15</sup>

While widows are feeling the brunt of social, emotional, physical and spiritual difficulties, this project recognizes that widows are able to discover their self-worth and value in a faith community of their choosing. As lay pastoral caregivers heard the various accounts that widows want a safe haven to cope with their grief/loss of a loved one in their lives. I observed in this project the *Kairos* (moment of caring) and community. Widows had something in common that guided them through the process of being listeners and showing compassion for one another. It was important that widows were identified and made visible to share their plight with others in a supportive space. The church is saying, I believe, it wants to mobilize and make a difference while providing a supportive community for the widows in its midst

The goals of this project are to: (1) increase the awareness of biblical, social and emotional practices of caring for widows; (2) recruit professional/volunteer and lay persons for the task of organizing a widow’s ministry in the congregation; (3) provide one seminar on determining the needs of widows in the congregation; (4) have 10 widows in the planning group and I would then publish a pastoral care pamphlet no more than ten pages as a resource to be used by pastors in other congregations and mainly the congregation of BMUMC; and (5) give the widow’s ministry (*Heart To Heart Widow’s Ministry*) formal announcement to the Church Council.

This project has relied on the efforts of me as an ordained deacon/clergy in the UMC, the site team members and the widows in the planning group (all laity) in getting it

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<sup>15</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 43.

started. While research was conducted on what has already been done in organizing and implementing widow's ministries, more has to be done in terms of putting emphasis on partnership between pastors and laity. I made use of the internet and library to trace the history of caring ministries designed to care for widows in the church and community and I observed most if not all were led by widows themselves with no involvement from the Church, except for the "go-head and do it." Those ministries did not put emphasis on what would happen when the pastor is no longer involved after the funeral and burial service, when the widow has stopped mourning and is now grieving. It did not say much about the continued support from the wider community regarding resources that bring continuous awareness of the needs of widows.

Teterud wrote, "Churches can learn how to launch effective ministries to widows by watching what other churches are doing and then following their example."<sup>16</sup> The works of John W. James and Frank Cherry in *The Grief Recovery Handbook: A Step-by-Step Program for Moving Beyond Loss*, and the work of Teterud in *Caring for Widows You & Your Church Can Make a Difference*, were useful resources. And, lastly in a Doctor of Ministry dissertation, "A Strategy for Ministry to Widows in the Local Church," by Richard W. Sadler at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Virginia, April 1, 1997 have all been helpful resources in organizing a widows' ministry.

The weeks prior to my implementing this project were a time of prayer and fasting, self-reflection and reading of Psalms for spiritual strength. I participated in a weekly Wednesday 6 a.m. morning telephone prayer conference, when I was available. I planned a nutritional diet that controlled my weight. I attended several full day or half

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<sup>16</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 96-97.

day conferences offered by the Association of Pastoral Education and by my endorsement agency. I attended several sessions at the NYTS Writing Center to address my written communication skills so my writing was clear before submitting. I had two women on my site team supporting and encouraging me. Lastly, I had a team of praying women. I was able to talk to and build my inner-spirit.

As a result of this project, I believe Butler Church is better prepared to meet the needs of widows. The church is aware that widows are no different than any other group needing care. It is about transformation and “peace” to those who are isolated, rejected, marginalized and stigmatized through no fault of their own. Gentzler quoted Bishop Kenneth I. Carder who said, “It hurts to be rejected on the basis of age as surely as it hurts to be rejected because of gender or race or any other unavoidable trait”<sup>17</sup> and this includes being a widow. This project can ultimately give strength to a faith community—the congregation’s ability to function as a caring ministry.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard H. Gentzler, “Is Your Church Ageist?” *Center Sage: A Resource for Leaders of Mid-Life and Older Adult Ministries* 12, (Fall 2006): 2.

## CHAPTER 1

### SHINING THE LIGHT ON THE NEEDS OF WIDOWS

I cannot think of a life changing experience that more alters one's social, psychological, emotional, spiritual and economic situation other than the loss of a spouse or significant other. The altering change is grief in many forms and it remains with the survivors during their life time. The survivors for the most part are women and they "are more likely than men to be widowed for two reasons according to researchers. First, women live longer than men...In addition, women tend to marry older men, although this gap has been narrowing. Because women live longer and marry older men, their odds of being widowed are much greater than men's," writes J. K. Trivedi, Himanshu Sareen, and Mohan Dhyani in an article titled "Psychological Aspects of Widowhood and Divorce."<sup>18</sup>

As women experience the brunt of this social phenomenon (of grieving) widowhood, it is more evident in the Church by the sheer number of widows attending Churches on Sundays where women outnumber men. Of interest in this report, I was able to identify at least 30+ widows in Butler congregation among a membership that is approximately 1034 on record, inclusive of children. In this project a group of 12-15 widows came forward in the congregation to participate and bring awareness of the needs of widows to the pastor, congregation leaders and on behalf of other widows, who chose

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<sup>18</sup> J. K. Trivedi, Himanshu Sareen and Mohan Dhyani, "Psychological Aspects of Widowhood and Divorce," <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3151454/> (accessed November 22, 2015).



to remain invisible. The length of widowhood for every woman in the planning group varied in length. Nonetheless, each of them was able to contribute to the discussions and planning based on their personal experiences of loss and grief. As the conversations were facilitated among the widows in the planning group it was apparent that the needs were similar and yet unique for everyone. I also shared my personal experience of loss to bring awareness and concern to the needs of widows at various stages in the discussions. The widows in the project talked about their need to be accepted, and their isolation and neglect in a community of faith.

Teterud, in *Caring for Widows: You and Your Church Can Make a Difference*, wrote this about a widow in a congregation: “Widows like Susan belong to local churches and form one of the most neglected [groups] of the church community. Generalizations about widows and insensitivities toward them in the Christian community have led to inappropriate care and, in some cases, a failure to care for the needs of the widows in the churches.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, shining the light on the needs of widows is an important start in caring for the well-being of this population regardless of location or status.

The death of a loved one under any circumstance is never an easy experience. With it come struggles and needs that ought to be addressed. Naming the issues are just as important as providing the necessary resources in meeting the needs. For women it is even more devastating in light of historical information where women were placed in subservient roles, where men made all of the decisions, whether in a less developed country or in the United States. The decisions left women at the mercy of others, which in turn often made living even more difficult. Sexism and ageism became the basis of poor

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<sup>19</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, xiv.

planning. Meaning, gender and age identity have biases that are against the best interest of women and, to make it even plainer, women who are widows are suffering from the social injustice and inequality of people who have no idea what it is like to be a widow. As in many institutions, the Church does not view widows as persons with needs, contributing to the additional struggle for the women. The expectation is to get on with life after the funeral.

In both the secular and religious community the needs of widows continue in health care, friends and family relationships, finances, and in other areas as well. For this population the indifference seems to center on ageism, in spite of the growing number of younger women becoming widows. The typical age of a widow was considered around age 65+ in the United States.

In many developing countries, the exact numbers of widows, their ages and other social and economic aspects of their lives are unknown. Almost worldwide, widows comprise a significant proportion of all women, ranging from 7% to 16% of all adult women (UN Division for the Advancement of Women, 2000). However, in some countries and regions, their proportion is far higher. In developed countries, widowhood is experienced primarily by elderly women, while in developing countries it also affects younger women, many of them still rearing children. In some regions, girls become widows even before reaching adulthood.<sup>20</sup>

The younger widows experience some if not more of the same challenges of widowhood as older widows—parenting and basically starting over if they remarry.

According to Genevieve Davis Ginsburg, “Each year more than a million people will join the 13.8 million widows and widowers in the United States.”<sup>21</sup> “In 2001 the American Association of Retired Persons, reported, “800,000 people are widowed each

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<sup>20</sup> Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyani, “Psychological Aspects of Widowhood.”

<sup>21</sup> Genevieve Davis Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow Thoughtful, Practical Ideas for Rebuilding Your Life* (De Capo Press, 1995), xi.

year and of those number 700,000 women lose their husbands and will be widows for an average of 14 years.”<sup>22</sup> Other reports state there are 13.6 million widows in the US, of which over 11 million of the widowed are women.

While Erwin writes, as discussed earlier, “Widows are the fastest growing groups within the church and our society today, according to the United States Census Bureau, approximately one out of ten women over the age of 17 is a widow. It should be noted that these statistics were recorded before September 11, 2001 . . . Carr provides more recent data regarding the number of widows. More than 900,000 adults are widowed each year in the United States, and nearly three quarters of them are over age 65.”<sup>23</sup>

According to the Widow’s Hope organization data from the United Nations (AP) on June 23, 2010, worldwide:

At least 245 million women around the world have been widowed and more than 115 million of them live in devastating poverty, according to a new study launched by Cherie Blair, wife of the former prime minister. According to the report, the countries with the highest number of widows in 2010 were China with 4.3 million, India with 42.4 million, Russia with 7.1 million, Brazil with 5.6 million, Germany with 5.1 million, and Bangladesh and Vietnam with about 4.7 million each.<sup>24</sup>

There seem to be no definitive statistics, yet these numbers are alarming in that women around the world remains the most neglected group in all society in spite of advancement in technology. It is my observation, keeping up with the statistics gives a sense of lack of concern for widows.

In support of this observation are Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyani write

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<sup>22</sup> Widow’s Hope, “These Are the Statistics.”

<sup>23</sup> Erwin, “The Theological Foundation.”

<sup>24</sup> Widow’s Hope, “These Are the Statistics.”

Despite [the] rapid advances in the standard of living of people worldwide the condition of a section of our population will remain deplorable, namely that of widows and divorced women (UN Division for Advancement of Women 2000). Death of the spouse or separation (legal or otherwise) appears to affect both the sexes in different ways and the psychological effect of these events is important. It can be said that no group is more affected than widows.<sup>25</sup>

The information and data provided by other organizations and groups seems to also support the lack of concern for widows.

While reviewing the literature there is an absence of information concerning “women development [career wise] health [care] or human rights [parity in wealth distribution]” . . . including “socioeconomic and psychological.”<sup>26</sup>

There are efforts at bringing global awareness to the concerns of widows. There is an interesting report by Cherie Blair, who is not only the wife of a prime minister, but also the President of the Loomba Foundation. While not a widow herself, she seems to have the passion to do more for widows around the world. Her report brings respect to the most “cherished and valuable members of our community”<sup>27</sup> She was present at The International Widows Day (IWD), an annual global event that brings “awareness of the plight of widows and their children, aiming to restore their human rights and through education and real empowerment help to alleviate the poverty and discrimination into which widowhood can plunge them.”<sup>28</sup> She brings further reality to the statistics of the “258 million widows around the world, that more than 115 million live in poverty; 86

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<sup>25</sup> Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyani, “Psychological Aspects of Widowhood.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Cherie Blair, “Why Widowhood is One of the Developing World’s Key Problems,” <http://www.the-guardian.com/co...why-widowhood-is-one-of-the-developing-world’s-key-problems> (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

million have suffered physical abuse.”<sup>29</sup> As she reports, the plight of widows are important to them [the organization] and it affects their children. In spite of the progress, the concerns are underreported—of gender inequalities—widows have truly been at the bottom of the pile, invisible and unheard for too long.”<sup>30</sup>

In countries outside of the United States, women who have lost husbands can mean the widow has become a non-person; however it is more than the absence of partner. “Through no fault of her own, she can suffer social discrimination, stigma and even violence, sometimes, as in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, being forced to cleanse herself by having sexual intercourse with a relative or stranger. A widow may also be denied inheritance and land rights or forced to drink the water that was used to clean her dead husband’s body.”<sup>31</sup>

“For millions of Asian women being widowed means a life of penury, humiliation and sexual abuse and agonizing wait for death. These are the issues that cross cultures, religions, countries and continents.”<sup>32</sup> For these widows it is more than a personal tragedy but a societal deterrent to human dignity. In countries where such demeaning assaults occur it is imperative that the plights of widows are brought to the consciousness of the faith communities. Widows must be empowered economically, socially, emotionally, politically, religiously, and in whatever way necessary that will alleviate their sufferings.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Pratibha J. Mishra, “Women Empowerment: Issues related to Widows,” *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 4, no. 5, (May 2015)  
<http://www.borjournals.com/a/index.php/jbmssr/article/view/2043/1343> (accessed December 1, 2015).

There are concerns that are uniquely related to widows regardless of global and social location. The death of a spouse is ranked as a debilitating stressor; often there are snowball effects of not caring for oneself. Sleep and eating patterns are severely disrupted during the mourning and grieving of a lost spouse; along with the heightened possibility of severe depression that results in substance abuse—alcohol and drugs. None of those factors should be overlooked or considered normal altered behaviors after the loss of a spouse.

The need to establish new relationships and maintaining existing relationships are impacted by the loss of a spouse. According to the Widow's Hope organization,

On average 75% of the survivor's support base is lost following the loss of a spouse or significant other. This includes loss of support from family and friends. There are a multitude of reasons for losing friends and family including, loss of couple's friends. Those widowed can isolate, we can be sad and unpleasant to be around, but these are the signs of grieving. For some widows, we take on more responsibility (taking care of a house and/or children) . . . Life changes in huge ways and we [widows] need to build new friendships and support systems.<sup>33</sup>

What better way to have this done than by calling on one's faith community for help.

A major stressor for the widow is often experienced in the decline of income. Kimberly Foss in her work with widows analyzes the financial and emotional impact of losing a spouse. She writes, "New York Life's 'Loss of a Spouse' study found that women are far more unprepared for the loss than men are. Following the loss of a spouse, 68% of widows reported significant life changes. And, not surprisingly, financial issues presented the greatest challenge."<sup>34</sup> The widows did not attribute their financial stress to a

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<sup>33</sup> Widow's Hope, "These Are the Statistics."

<sup>34</sup> Kimberly Foss, "Work Smarter with Widows," *Financial Planning*, Jan 22, 2015, <http://feelincontrol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Work-Smarter-With-Widows.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2015).

lack of planning, but that they felt more secure about their financial situation prior to their spouse's death. The widows themselves did wish they had better finances. The decisions regarding finances can trigger other decisions for the widow. According to Puryl Sevak, David R Weir, and Robert J. Willis,

Widowhood remains an important risk factor for transition into poverty. Faced with the loss of resources in widowhood, women have only a few options available to improve their economic status. Remarriage is difficult because of the demographic imbalances caused by shorter male life expectancy. We find some evidence that widows live with children or siblings so that they can be part of a household with more resources and earning income through work is the other main way women can improve their status, although that becomes increasingly difficult with age.<sup>35</sup>

However, the other high risk options, available are selling the house, the car, liquidating savings to pay bills from saving bonds that were planned for other use like a child's college education or even an extended vacation that was planned by her and her now deceased spouse and her. In spite of their situation widows are living on the fringes of poverty in many cases that equal being neglected.

The global and the faith communities seek to explain the needs of widows. As pointed out by Erwin, this is the church's time

To meet the unique and various needs of individual widows, there is the increased opportunity for their spiritual transformation and retention as an active, contributing member. Various ministries need to be developed and supported that meet their practical, spiritual, and social needs during and after the week of their husband's death and funeral. The church's positive witness to the family and friends of the widow is increased through the demonstration of Christian love to their widowed mother, sister, daughter, and friend. Thus, spiritual transformation can occur within families,

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<sup>35</sup> Puryl Sevak, David R Weir, and Robert J. Willis, "The Economic Consequences of a Husband's Death: Evidence from the HRS and AHEAD," *Social Security Bulletin* 65 no. 3 (2003/2004) <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v65n3/v65n3p31.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2015).

communities, and the church itself because of the Christian Soul Care given to widows.<sup>36</sup>

### **Case Study:**

Beverly was allowed to freely talk in an open-ended interview while I listened to her. Beverly was a widow in the group who lost her husband at age 69. She says, “My husband and I attended this church for a long time, in fact since we have been in New York since moving from Virginia.” “We have been connected to this Church almost all of our entire life together.” They got married in a Methodist Church back in Virginia. The three children were christened at this Church . . . “Rev. J. was the pastor when we came here. Others have come since him” . . . They had moved here from a community, where “everybody knows one another.” They had lots of friends. She says, “We got married very young. I was 19 years old,” she says. She was married to the same man all of her young adult life and into her senior years. They had children together . . . She was the home maker and her husband worked as a laborer in a nearby town before coming to New York. Her early years was mostly rearing the children . . . but eventually they all grew up and went on their own. Her husband retired from his job at the hospital after 37 years. This gave them more time together. Things were much easier, “We had plans to travel and to spend time with the grandchildren and our adult children.” Her husband, she says, did everything that was needed outside of the house. “He made sure all the bills were paid. He only rarely talked about money and bills.” [The sound of her voice changed and tears began to form in her eyes].

She began to talk about her husband’s sudden illness and eventual death. She recalled her husband began to complain of body pain. He didn’t like doctors and refused to go for help for the unbearable pain. “We were up all during the night unable to sleep. Eventually, he agreed to see a doctor. “We spent days in the doctor’s office going places for tests.” She says, “I was

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<sup>36</sup> Erwin, “The Theological Foundation.”



not feeling good about what was going on at all.” “When, I tell you I was puzzled, I was puzzled. The doctor told him, us, you have a mass in you and it may be cancer.” She says, “I felt like I was going to die.” Her life with her “only companion, and friend.” Their life was beginning to change, she says. All the plans, they had went just like that . . . She says, “I could not believe it,” “My days after getting the cause of the pain left me numb and in a daze.” Several months passed after the diagnosis. “It was the most difficult time of our life together. My husband was good. He was doing his best to keep me calm. In fact, he took it better than I did.” He was admitted to the hospital, because she and other family members, mostly her daughter, could not help him manage the pain any longer. The doctor had told them the pain would be very difficult. From the hospital, he was transferred to hospice care, where he died. She recalls the day, “His death, somehow was a relief,” for the moment. “I just could not bear seeing him in pain any longer.” It was very hard, “I was at the hospital every day, long hours. At the time it didn’t seem to bother me. There was a funeral service. Lots of people came, friends and family. People was very helpful in seeing that I got through the wake and funeral . . . I didn’t go to church as I liked when he was sick. The preacher came by the hospital with some of the other people several times. They prayed for us. Other people were there . . . I didn’t feel I was alone. I didn’t feel lonely. There was people around me.” She says, “I can’t tell you when things started to change, but everyone seemed to have gone away . . . My daughter had her home to take care of and her family. It seemed like two weeks later I was so tired. . . I couldn’t sleep, had no appetite, I didn’t leave my house. The time in the hospital had caught up with me and I was on my own, I finally realized my husband’s death was real. I am talking now like it was easy but I can tell anyone, I don’t have to tell you it was hard. [I acknowledge, I had a difficult time after the funeral]. She had come face to face with death—loss, mourning, and grieving. “I wanted to talk to someone, but there was no one I felt comfortable with, even in the Church.”

## **An Inventory of Struggles:**

Beverly's story demonstrates that the death of her husband was followed by emotional, social, physical and spiritual struggles associated with grief. Social science says grief has stages to follow and that we handle each stage differently. Grief is also a life time experience for anyone who experiences loss. The emotional struggles are often unexpected. Mrs. J. said, "I was driving and all of a sudden tears were flowing from my eye." Widows in the project confirmed their "loneliness," "anger," "hurt" and "disappointments" openly. One widow in the group commented, "I would not wish the experience [grief] on my worst enemy." Genevieve Davis Ginsburg put it this way, "No widow is prepared for the barrage of feelings within her. She is 'No longer in charge,' 'going crazy,' 'obsessed with his absence,' and 'filled with rage' are just some of the ways widows describe their inner turmoil [struggles] at this time"<sup>37</sup> Researchers agreeing with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's assessments and observations reports these emotions are identifiable, as in Beverly's situation. The inventory of struggles, we all follow, are "consistent unpredictability."<sup>38</sup> Kubler-Ross' work on death and dying named the stages [struggles] of grieving. Accordingly they are:

1. **Shock and Denial:** The period when death is recognized but not yet fully integrated into reality. The person appears calm, rational and emotionally contained on the outside and is automatically programed from the inside.
2. **Confusion:** When the mind is overloaded with thoughts demands and decisions, along with the emerging reality. This period is marked by forgetfulness, irrational thoughts and behavior, and indecisiveness.

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<sup>37</sup> Genevieve Davis Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow: Thoughtful, Practical Ideas for Rebuilding Your Life* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., xi.

3. **Emotional Release:** Characterized by tears and sudden outburst. The person worries about these emotional releases because she previously felt more in control, and outside observers may consider them excessive.
4. **Anger and [Hurt]:** One of the hallmarks of widowhood, the “unfair” time when blame is often misdirected, inwardly or outwardly, and sometimes denied entirely and manifested through different emotions more acceptable to the person.
5. **Guilt:** Self-recrimination and self-blame for events of the past, unfinished business. “If only” and “I should have” thoughts prevail.
6. **Depression and Isolation:** A period of pervasive sadness, self-pity and no interest in the world and the people in it. Depression is often the onset of reality and change of lifestyle.
7. **Recovery:** The last stage, Acceptance is finalized and the widowed person begins to function independently and to make a new life.<sup>39</sup>

During the project, widows realized that their struggles are real and there are no quick fixes to grieving. Widows must go through each of these stages, but not necessarily alone without some support. Yet, regardless of age, status, race, economic level or religion, widows recognize that “Grief is an Equalizer.”<sup>40</sup> The majority of widows in the planning group had been widowed for a number of years and felt a level of comfort in telling their story. Widows in this stage are beginning to experience grief positively because of their participation in the planning group, even those who initially expressed they had passed a particular stage.

### **Analysis**

Beverly had no idea her life would come to such an abrupt stop. Beverly’s husband’s death was sudden. The death of her husband left her to claim a new identity

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 5.

with challenges—of feeling less protected and secure, because she relied on her husband being present. For Beverly, they shared many years of companionship and friendship, essential components in any relationship. She had plans to live out their golden years by traveling and enjoying her grandchildren with her husband. His illness shattered both of their lives. Perhaps her faith was shattered and caused her to question God in light of the limited support she got from her faith community. They attended the same Church for spiritual care. Yet, in a time of need their faith community responded with reluctance. The death of her husband clearly had an impact on her that will remain until eternity. Beverly recognized that during the illness, she had neglected her physical and emotional health. She had depended on her spouse's recovery more than she had realized—all of the tasks outside of the home were taken care of by him. He paid all the bills. Her struggles with loneliness, guilt, isolation, health, managing her finances, family relationships and friends and other issues are no different and no less real than with others in her community of faith. The thing she needed most was support and spiritual care from her community after she survived her initial shock.

John W. James and Frank Cherry in *The Grief Recovery Handbook: A Step-by-Step Program for Moving beyond Loss* wrote, “As long as we believe that someone or something else is responsible, then we’re helpless to recover.”<sup>41</sup> In essence, widows are the pilot of their own destiny and must come to grip with the struggles inherent in grieving. The negative emotions—loneliness, anger, hurt and disappointments—are powerless in its meaning and attempts to destroy life.

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<sup>41</sup> John W. James and Frank Cherry, *The Grief Recovery Handbook: A Step-by-Step Program for Moving Beyond Loss* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988), 53.

## Interpretation

While Butler Church must find ways to extend care to its widows, James and Cherry write, “Most widows are comforted and reassured when they can connect with others having the same human struggles, but there are those who choose not to. They are the women who believe they should be able to cope on their own or that their individuality is diminished if they identify with other widows.”<sup>42</sup> However, as the faith community offers a caring presence to widows, they will be able to address the challenges openly in a caring space to gain self-worth and independence.

Toward this end, together we have put together a plan of action to develop a pastoral care ministry for widows—one that assists the pastor in caring for widows at Butler Church. Widows in the planning group are saying, “The Church needs to know what is going on with us” and “to do more to help people who need help.” The next step in this project describes how the Church might mobilize itself by addressing the needs identified and providing pastoral care for widows in a space that they may feel most comfortable.

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<sup>42</sup> Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow*, 4.

## CHAPTER 2

### MOBILIZING THE CHURCH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As far as I can recall this Bible passage taken from the Gospel of Matthew 28:18-28 has inspired Butler congregation's mission statement, which says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." As the congregation grew and experienced transformation it has revised its mission statements to reflect the presence of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Its current Mission Statement reads:

Butler Memorial United Methodist Church is a beloved community of hope and faith which proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ, provides fellowship for all of God's people, and equips persons for ministry within the church and the wider community.<sup>43</sup>

Currently, the Pastor and leadership has interpreted its mission in a manner that reflects an effort at reaching out to others with love and hope, by encouraging the members to experience God's calling upon their lives that they serve others, and to build its edifice by providing space available for physical growth in God's grace. As the Church engages in evangelism these concepts are prayerfully proclaimed in the life of the Church as Jesus would have it. The modes of its theology of practicing a faithful religion are in the Wesleyan practices of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reasoning.

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<sup>43</sup> Butler Memorial United Methodist Church. "103<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration Journal, Saturday" (New York: Butler Memorial United Methodist Church, April 25, 2015).

Therefore, “Go making disciples for Jesus Christ” is not just another statement for a group of religious people, but also a people with a live faith that practices the Good News. Scripture is primary and the authority by which the Church must transform our lives. Our tradition helps to inform us of a past that has worked or has not worked as we seek God for instruction. Our experience helps us to tell the stories of our love for others, while recognizing everything comes from God through Jesus Christ. Our ability to reason is a gift from God that moves us into a life of grace, community, and eternal peace, which is our reasonable expectation. I believe these are the tool of effective evangelism, hat honors all of God’s people, all of human circumstances and that includes widows.

I remember my joining Butler congregation and being inspired by the evangelism committee outreach ministry. As a lay person, I was actively involved in the ministry under several pastoral leadership through the years, especially that of Rev. Granville Forde. I was engaged in outreach ministries with others as we attempted to follow Jesus’ “Great Commission.” The congregation grew numerically and spiritually by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Good News was preached and the worship was life-changing for me. I account my spiritual growth to the various ministries of Butler Church, where I responded to the call to ordained ministry. The congregation to this day has not lost its vitality for evangelizing the unchurched. They know Jesus promised to be with us [them] and He was with this congregation through the 103 years of ministry.

Daniel Migliore pointed out in *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, that there are mysteries in the church, but we have failed to remember the profound practices of our faith. Migliore explains it this way:

The mystery is that through the free grace of God in Jesus Christ at work in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is breaking down all

walls of separation and making “one new humanity” (Eph. 2:15). The mystery of the church is that it is called to bear witness to and participate in the trinitarian love of God, the God who gives existence to others, shares life and power, and lives in the mutual giving and receiving of love. The church is called to be the beginning of new human life in relationship, solidarity, and friendship beyond all privatism, classism, racism, and sexism.<sup>44</sup>

I believe this is the Church’s finest hour especially for those, who are willing to tap into those mysteries that God has in place for us. We are in a position where timing means a lot in reaching out to those in need. Of interest may well be for those who care for the widows in their midst while they are seeking transformation and healing from neglect and isolation. I am reminded of the biblical narrative in Acts 6:1-6, where the “Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.” If the Church desires to be a place where people [widows] come, and are made whole from their pain and hurt then caring for the widow is a mark of its evangelism—for mobilization.

However, it must be executed from the top and then filter throughout the entire congregation. According to Teterud, “Just as the early church mobilized during their crisis . . . in (Acts 6:1-6), so the contemporary church must once again renew its commitment to the care of widows.”<sup>45</sup>

Statistics continue to show more women than men are in the pews on Sunday; of that population there are widows, and some are widows with children. Along with children they are the most vulnerable and marginalized in the church. There are several church models noted by Migliore on how the Church is portrayed historically and

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<sup>44</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 251.

<sup>45</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, xiv.



currently. However, for my purpose, I believe the “servant” also known as the “diaconal” model has much to offer the population being singled out in this project; and it actually addresses an attitude of mobilizing, which the deacons in the Book of Acts chapter 6 had performed on behalf of the Church to the widows and orphans. Migliore writes:

...The church is not primarily an institution whose purpose is survival and expansion, nor an intimate community designed to foster the personal growth of individuals who feel neglected and depersonalized by modern society, nor merely the herald of a message. The church is a servant community called to minister in God’s name on behalf of fullness of life for all of God’s creatures . . . the church serves God by serving the world in its struggle for emancipation, justice, and peace . . . a church that is servant rather than master of the world has been influential in many modern ecclesiologies. It plays an important role both in the emphasis on the church’s mission of reconciliation in the midst of conflict and in the call to the church to participate in the struggle for liberation of the oppressed. This ministry includes both the church’s proclamation of the gospel and the church’s efforts to foster reconciliation in societies torn by racism, international conflict, indifference to poverty, and sexual exploitation.<sup>46</sup>

The Methodist Church and other denominations have a rich heritage of caring for those in need and marginalized in society. As Methodists, we are grounded in the principles of “social holiness,” meaning, to love God is to love your neighbor—the widows and the orphan, the prisoner, the aged, the substance abuser, the homeless, the prostitute, the beggar and whomever comes to the house of God. I am confident that this belief holds true for other denominations as well. Yet, the Church appears to be invisible as our young black men are murdered everyday by self-inflicted wounds or by the hands of others. The Black Church appears speechless, while the Civil Right laws that were enacted decades ago are being overturned because of partisan disagreement in

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<sup>46</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 259.

Washington, D.C. Michael W. Foss wrote in an article, “Reviving the Congregation: Pastoral Leadership in a Changing Context,” that,

Connecting the present ministry to the past efforts of our congregations brings people together. The past is no longer used as a justification for not doing anything. Instead, it becomes the spur to faithful and fruitful action in the present. Building on the successes of the past acknowledges our responsibility to continue our ministry by looking at creative ways we can reach out in the name of Jesus Christ. Congregations that use the past to ward off the future will not have a future. Few of our churches were started with the goal of only surviving and serving the present. The vast majority of our churches were established and built with the vision of future generations worshiping and growing in faith within them. An effective strategy for moving into the future is to look for the best of the past and lift it up as a springboard for tomorrow. This is not always easy, and it rarely happens without mistakes.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, this is perhaps the most challenging time for the Church.

However, as Christians along with others must make an effort to climb out of a period of economic, social, political and religious decline in this country, which appears to have a strong hold on the Church. The Church was birthed by Jesus, for the people of God. I am reminded of Jesus’ mission. In Luke 4:16-19, Jesus was in the synagogue, a place of worship, as was his custom. As he prepared, he unrolled the scroll and preached what had been prophesied long by Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” The text says, “But the truth is there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah . . . and there was a severe famine over all the land, yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath . . . In real time everyone was

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<sup>47</sup> Michael W. Foss, *Reviving the Congregation: Pastoral Leadership in a Changing Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), <http://muse.jhu.edu>. (accessed November 29, 2015), 83.

not on board as the mission was told in their hearing and some were “filled with rage.” What is apparent in this narrative is our mission to take action as Jesus’ followers on behalf on his kingdom in the earth.

In implementing this demonstration project at Butler Church, everyone was not on board. In fact, some of the widows wanted nothing to do with the project and did not hesitate in letting me know. Their reactions were no surprise to me, since I had been with the people in this congregation for over twenty-five years as a lay person in ministry with them. Since 2007, I have been working with other churches in the district and working toward my subsequent ordination as an ordained deacon. I must say, they were supportive of my efforts at my completing the requirements for ordination and showed much respect in my role as an ordained clergy in the UMC.

With my personal experience of loss and my history with this congregation I decided to implement my project proposal (see Appendix A) in this setting. I had a subsequent meeting with the pastor, the Church Council members, and the United Methodist Women organization. I asked the Pastor, Church Council members, and the United Methodist Women organization and widows to respond to questions that will be further discussed in Chapter Five. The following questions were asked:

**Part A:**

1. I am a widow.
2. I am aware of Bible passages that address the need of widows.
3. Are you aware of any Bible stories concerning widows in the Bible?
4. My spouse has a parent who is widowed.
5. Do you know a widow in our congregation?
6. Have you had a conversation with a widow in the past three months?
7. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation?

8. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year?
9. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows?
10. What resources are available to widows in the congregation?
11. Rate your congregations' level of activity on caring for widows, using a scale of 1 to 5.
12. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow ministry?
13. If you are a widow, are you living with someone?

**Part B - Continue this questionnaire if you are a widow.**

1. Do you ever wish you had someone to counsel you?
2. Do you sometimes feel misunderstood?
3. Being a widow, you are well aware of the frustrations, and fears of widowhood.
4. If you were a younger member of the church, how would you help widows?
5. What would you say to the church to help them understand the widow's needs?
6. Would it be helpful if the church had a ministry that did outreach to widows?
7. What are some areas the Church should assist the widow?
8. What kind of assistance is most helpful for widows? Name five things:
9. Overall, how do you feel your church is doing in taking care of the widows?
10. Do you feel that it is the church's place to assist widows?
11. Who usually checks on you? Please circle the answer that applies:
12. Do you feel you are forgotten by the congregation?
13. Do you feel that your church genuinely loves and cares for you?
14. How did your pastor/church minister to your needs during the first year of your grieving?
15. Are you willing to participate in a project to form a widow's ministry in this congregation?

I distributed 70 of the above questionnaires and 25 were returned incomplete from participants. In analyzing the data it was alarming that less than half of the questionnaires were returned from the Pastor, Church Council members and the UMW organization. Since their participation is vital in seeing that a widow ministry succeeds in the

congregation. The Pastor and members of the Church Council are the governing body that has the responsibility of approving a new ministry in the congregation. I am convinced that people were complacent in their actions, because when my proposal was introduced to the Church Council the verbal responses were enthusiastic, which is not evident in the small return of the questionnaire. However, the UMW organization was promising, in that the returns indicated an interest in participating in the planning group. Others need to be on the front line mobilizing the Church for greater works. Overall, the questionnaire was useful in that I recruited 12-15 widows to implement a planning group. In addition, the questionnaire identified 30+ widows in the congregation and there are others.

The widows in this project contend that it was time that the body of Christ mobilizes its caring ministry to make a difference for all of God's people that includes widows. There is an old adage that says, "If you want something done, do it yourself." As true as this may sound, widows in the planning group was not taking this adage literally. The next step in the process involved scheduling the various strategies to implement the project. The responsible officers who had the task of assisting me with available dates and time was ready to work alongside me in making things happen.

### **Butler Memorial United Methodist Church: Introducing the Setting**

BMUMC, Bronx, New York is a Church where you can experience the call to pastoral leadership for the larger faith community. It also gives pastoral leadership the responsibility to equip laity for service ministry. BMUMC is a professing Bible-based faith community that holds Scripture as the authority for doing ministry. Regardless of human conditions, Butler Church has pride in its ministry efforts on carrying out the biblical mandate of Jesus Christ in a broken community.

BMUMC compliments its inherited tradition passed down through many centuries of leaders and followers. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley cared for all of God's people regardless of their social status and condition. He preached and practiced God's grace of caring during his ministry to the sick, the prisoners, the weak and lame, the widows and children, the poorest in society. Wesley's life of grace was evident in the way he cared for self and neighbor. He truly believed his actions were God's love for humanity through him.

BMUMC has a heritage that is rooted in a deep and profound understanding of God's grace. Its tradition of Methodism is an evangelical witness to God's gift of caring for all of God's people. "Methodists believe this incredible grace [caring] flows from God's great love for us."<sup>48</sup> In a practical way Methodists define grace as the love and mercy God gives us because God wants us to have it, not because of anything we have done to earn it. The people of Butler Church share this fundamental doctrine of grace as Methodists. Clergy and laity alike stress this concept of caring in their spiritual practices—studying the Scriptures, prayer, in fellowship with other Christians, by deepening our knowledge of God, and partaking of the Communion. By keeping these spiritual disciplines, we are on a continuous journey for Christian perfection.

Butler Church shares in the common characteristics of the Christian faith. Like most mainline Protestant denominations, it follows Jesus' teaching in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19a, where he told his followers, "Go therefore, and make

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<sup>48</sup> The United Methodist Church, United Methodist Handbook, "Let's Go Fishing: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World," United Methodist Communications, <http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/unitedmethodist/handbook/#/0>, 1.

disciples of all nations.” This is BMUMC’s primary mission in the community “to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Butler practices its caring ministry through: 1) An inviting and inspiring worship; 2) An engaged disciple for mission and outreach; 3) A gifted partnership between clergy and laity; 4) An effective, educated, and inspired clergy; and 5) Small group ministries for all age-levels. Through these caring ministries people are encouraged, supported, and held accountable in their stewardship and Christian life. While some congregations are more vital than others, these aspects are evident in plans of action to see that lives are transformed. We Methodists are proud to invite others by using this slogan, “Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors.”<sup>49</sup> At Butler Church, this slogan is experienced through the ministry of giving. The monetary gifts from its members spread the globe. The UMC is a generous organization, in its financial giving from the Apportionments (monies) by the local congregations to the various boards, agencies, and ministries of the church. For example, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) provide and The Advance, are the mission-giving channels that work to provide medical supplies, food and water, clothing and the rebuilding of shelter in devastated areas around the world.

BMUMC was established through “the efforts of a small group of civic-minded people with a missionary zeal to have a Methodist Church in the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx.”<sup>50</sup> In spite of the changing demographics of the neighborhood, Butler Church remains a striving spiritual center in the North East section of the Bronx, New York. The preaching and worship services continue to touch the lives of people. The

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> History Committee, chaired by Mary Morton, “Butler Historical Moments,” *Notes* (New York: Butler Memorial United Methodist Church, n. d.), 4.

current recorded membership is 1034. The average Sunday attendance is approximately 356, between two services (8a.m. and 11a.m.). Butler is primarily an African American and Caribbean American congregation, folks who have origins from the South, several Caribbean Islands, and the continent of Africa. However, its current membership is mostly native New Yorkers, born in the '60s and '70s during the baby boomer generation. They are older adults, working class people, and many are professionals who are about to retire. Among this older population of women, a significant number are widows (this project will identify this population). In many mainline Protestant congregations women visibly outnumber the men; this is true of Butler's congregation. There are a significant number of older adults between the ages of 55 and 65. It is a challenge for the congregation to involve those between 30 and 45 in the ministry.

There are many programs and opportunities for ministry—evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men groups, and the existence of many small group (auxiliaries) ministries for all age level—consisting of choirs, and ushers—and two midweek Bible Study groups that meet in the day and evening. There is the nontraditional ministry for youth, such as, a boys' basketball team.

The spiritual life of BMUMC is grounded in the principals of "social holiness." Meaning, to love God is to love your neighbor—the widow and the orphan, the prisoner, the aged and the most vulnerable in society. By practicing theses spiritual disciplines—prayer, Bible Study, Holy Conferencing, Communion, and obeying the ordinances of God, it sustains our connection to God that inspires us to do ministry. United Methodists are always on a continuous journey of spiritual growth for perfection. These practices



have shaped our theology of social holiness that God is for all people regardless of marital status, sexuality, race, class, gender, age, education, income, social status, and certainly the widow. Along this same line, to care for the widow is a mandate of one's Christian faith performed through works of "piety" and works of "mercy," which are the essences of God's love in action.

Butler, in light of the religious perils in society, continues to be a beacon of hope. It continues to be actively involved in attracting seekers, who are looking for a place to worship. As the church grows and peoples' lives are altered, the church must continue its path of faithfulness by reaching out to those who are of different ethnic, and cultural background—the new immigrants. Butler women, many who are widows, gave their resources—time, prayers, talents, skills, witnessing, preaching and testifying—that the church mobilize, grow and be the place God intended for all people. They have faithfully served in various capacities—Sunday School teachers, Deaconesses, Evangelist, chair of Women's Day Committees, Finances Boards, and much more. The Church is in a new era that calls for a renewal of its vision, mission and purpose; yet, it is still connected as one body in Jesus Christ to make a difference biblically, spiritually, and socially.

The UMW, whose purpose is to do missions with women and children, was actively participating in this project. They have always been an organization that existed for the "purpose is to know God and experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship and to expand the concepts of Mission through participation in the global ministries of the Church."<sup>51</sup> Therefore, it was no

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<sup>51</sup> United Methodist Women, *United Methodist Women Handbook 2013-2016* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2013), <http://www.umwmissionresources.org/pdfs/handbook2013-2016.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2015), 5.

surprise this organization would be supportive of widows. Women in the congregation have played leading roles in chairing and organizing the ministries of the church where lives are transformed. Even those women who are not formal members of this organization, contributed to the successes of the overall caring ministry of Butler Church since its early beginning. Therefore, it is not only the entire responsibility of the Church's leadership, but also that of women to mobilize to care for each other as they experience pain and suffering in a personal way as widows. It is incumbent of the Church to respond to its biblical mandate of caring for their widows.

### CHAPTER 3 OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND GETTING HELP

Grieving does not go away because the survivor wants it to or even has done something to make life easier during the process of restoring life. It will take everyone in the person's circle to help the survivor in overcoming barriers and getting help. As survivors let it be known, "I have lost my spouse," it begins the process of collaboration and healing that ought to be affirmed by caregivers, family, friends, laity, clergy, chaplains, counselors and others.

A point of interest here are the widows, the pastor and compassionate people in Butler Church, who are willing to come together to provide a safe haven for those who may feel neglected and isolated. As I have experienced personally and in conversations with widows, we are unique individuals with barriers associated with us and it often hinders our moving ahead. As this collaborative relationship develops, everyone needs to recognize the human value and dignity of everyone because we are all created in the image of God. As it relates to widows those specific barriers (myths/stereotypes) are: (1) the perception that all widows are old women 60-65+, (2) have difficulty establishing new relationships, (3) have difficulty overcoming the cultural, social and religious myths and stigmas of widowhood, and (4) have difficulty asking for help from support groups and getting the resources from organizations and institutions such as our churches and social programs.

## **A Needed Shift in Attitudes**

As Christians, concerned individuals and organizations dealing with the above barriers, it is important to know where they may have originated and how to overcome them. Our experience tells us, barriers are internal and external, and our social location has a way of teaching us unknowingly and knowingly. As we learn barriers we pass them on to others, in this case to widows. In Dr. Nancy Fields dissertation on “Reaching People/Changing Lives: A Look at How the People of Faith Can Participate with the Deaf Community in Improving Parent-Child Relationship,” she quoted Harold H. Wilke, who wrote:

Barriers of attitudes stand in the way of understanding and acceptance. They stand between person and person. On either side of the barrier, each person extends outward to many persons, to institutions, and even to countries . . . these attitudinal barriers, therefore, may be immensely more difficult to overcome than the architectural ones, difficult as those are. The reason this barrier of attitude is difficult to overcome is mainly that it’s inside of us . . . Since it is within [us], it may not even be based on fact in regard to the outer person, but it clearly is a fact within [us].<sup>52</sup>

I agree with this, however, the attitudes are subtle when it comes to dealing with disadvantaged and marginalized individuals in society, such as widows in this project. For example, in my conversation with the Pastor about starting the “Heart to Heart Widow’s Ministry” in the congregation, his response was “with the Older Adult Ministry.” I immediately said to him, “every widow is not 60-65 years old.” Unknowingly, he viewed widows as old women. It was important to call attention to this

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<sup>52</sup> Nancy B. Fields, “Reaching People/Changing Lives: A Look at How the People of Faith Can Participate with the Deaf Community in Improving Parent-Child Relationships” (M. Div. diss., New York Theological Seminary, 2006), 41-42.

kind of assumption, if not we are reinforcing the stereotypes and myths of widowhood in society.

According to Sarah H. Matthews in *The Social World of Old Women: Management of Self-Identity* pointed out, “The stigma theory that age and poor health are synonymous is used to justify a mandatory retirement age, but it also has an effect on everyday interactions. Old people because of their advanced age are more easily assumed to be incapable of performing adequately.”<sup>53</sup> As an older adult member of society, I will say that barriers are difficult to remove but not impossible to unlearn when it is confronted.

According to Bobbie Harro, “Some of us who are agents may decide to use power and privilege to try to make change—either out of guilt, moral values, or vision. If our motivation is guilt, we are doomed to fail, but if we operate from a strong moral base and vision, and if we work together with our targeted brothers and sisters, we create hope. We become allies with our target groups and build coalitions for success.”<sup>54</sup> We must begin to challenge the social construct of our culture, “by learning more about each other, by unlearning old myths and stereotypes.”<sup>55</sup>

Navamani Peter pointed out that the Church Missionary Society in India, “has failed to help the widows to break barriers of age [past] old customs and traditions which

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<sup>53</sup> Sarah H. Matthews, *The Social World of Old Women: Management of Self-Identity*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1997), 61-62.

<sup>54</sup> Bobbie Harro, “The Cycle of Socialization,” in *Readings Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Anti-Semitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism and Classism*, ed. Maurianne Adams, et al., (Routledge: New York, 2000), 20.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

put them in a disadvantaged position in the society. The church has to come forward to liberate them from the evil and superstitions practices and customs in the society.”<sup>56</sup>

Teterud wrote that, “The attitude and actions of leaders in the local church are critical for any program of care to be initiated. Care for widows in the early church began with a concern by the apostles and other leaders (Acts 6:1-6). It is no different in this century or in our culture. Care begins at the top.”<sup>57</sup> While, barriers are confronted, it may bring awareness to the church and society that widows are not different people, but they are just people with a new identity—widowhood as no fault of theirs.

Like everyone, widows want equal justice in the areas of social status, economic resources, and help with their physical and emotional health as it relates to equal parity. We must begin to recognize that widows are among other groups that face oppression and discrimination as well. There are “systemic constraints [in place], that are not necessarily the results of a tyrant,” but nevertheless the results are the same—oppressive. The attitudes and behaviors do have categories says, Iris Marion Young: “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.”<sup>58</sup> She further writes, “Its names [are] . . . an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people.”<sup>59</sup> It is also important to understand that within this framework people of color and other ethnicity often experience additional or even harsher punitive measure because of racism.

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<sup>56</sup> Navamani Peter, “Widowhood: Is It A Curse?”  
<http://www.womenutc.com/widowhoodisitacurse1.htm> (accessed April 14, 2015), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 104.

<sup>58</sup> Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” in Adams et al., *Readings Diversity and Social Justice*, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

There are attitudes on how women are viewed in the Asian culture. An interesting point was made by Andrew Sung Park, in *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, in the context of “Hierarchical Dualism. He seems to imply that the double standards are in “the sin of humanity.” We see others as either human or non-human. In this “self-other dichotomy,” there is a separation between the human and the non-human. In the process “The inferior group usually internalizes the dominant idea while the superior group rationalizes exploitation of the inferior group on the ground of their lesser value. Evil arises from the distortion of the self-other relationship into superior-inferior and good-evil dualism.”<sup>60</sup> Meaning, those in authority has places themselves higher than those who are viewed as inferior—the widows. However, as part of that culture or not, as widows, we must not allow our self-concepts to be caught up in this web of evil, where others have control of our inner being. Therefore, it is important then that widows join together and began to alter the behaviors of oppressors in a patriarchal society like that in other countries—Asia, Korea, India and others.

There is also a black experience in the need to change our attitudes and perception towards widows. Howard Thurman in *Jesus and the Disinherited* pointed out, “The enormity of this sin cannot be easily grasped. The situation is so tragic that men of good will in all the specious classifications within our society find more cause for hope in the secular relations of life than in religion.”<sup>61</sup> Thurman ended his chapter on “Love,” by writing, “It is universal, knowing no age, no race, no culture, and no condition of men

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 53.

<sup>61</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 90.

[conditions of widows]. For the privileged and underprivileged alike, if the individual puts at the disposal of the Spirit the needful dedication and discipline, he [she] can live effectively in the chaos of the present the high destiny of a son [daughter] of God.”<sup>62</sup>

### **The History of Widow’s Ministries**

The term *widow* in this report is directed specifically “to a woman, who has lost her husband [and significant other] by physical death.”<sup>63</sup> It also has a “color: *black* and associative words that immediately rise to the surface: *grief, tears, loneliness, poverty, panic, guilt and anger*.”<sup>64</sup> The means by which she may have joined this group is by no means a fault of her own doing. However, the newest persons who have joined are young women, who have lost their husband’s in recent wars and those I imagine who had lost spouse and companion as a result in the increase of crime and were murdered. The statics quoted earlier, are certain to rise overtime.

However, the earliest documentation of widowhood as I have studied it for this project are found in the Old and New Testament narratives of the Bible, where God has repeatedly honored the status of widows. God gave lots of attention to the protection and security of widows and orphans, more so than any other disadvantaged group in the Bible. According to Teterud, “God legislated laws in favor of widows that put institutions [family and marriage] in place to assist widows and if those institutions cared for widows that they in turn were blessed. God protected widows and made provisions for widows.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>63</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, xv.

<sup>64</sup> Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow*, 3

<sup>65</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 13.



There are indications that women were deacons in the early church. It was called “*an order of widows*, parallel to the clerical orders in the [early] Church.”<sup>66</sup> The order was very distinct from other church orders, such as the deaconesses, but both were considered to be part of the early churches ministry conduct by women. “It existence is attested by the great church order of the imperial church, “especially by the *Testamentum Domini* (c. A.D. 350), which gives prayers for the widows’ institution, and by the *Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 370).”<sup>67</sup> However, there was a decline in the order due in part to “the changing status of ministry in the larger church and the Edict of Constantine (313). And even then, this is blurred, because it is associated with the ministry of the ‘diaconate,’ which is very much Catholic in nature.”<sup>68</sup> Bonnie Bowman Thurston associated “the order of widows as a victim of church history. The demise of the widows is a case in point of what can happen when the church appropriates the values and cultural patterns of the larger society and loses its vocation as ‘holy’ (set apart).”<sup>69</sup>

In recent years in the United Methodist denomination the diaconate is anyone ordained and their ministry connects the Church and Society. Meaning, service of any nature is recognized as providing servant leadership on behalf of the denomination. Nonetheless the rules were clearly in place to oversee the care of widows in Scripture and the early Church. In reality, we have to say the history of widow’s ministries was established by God many centuries ago.

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<sup>66</sup>John Wijngaards, “The Historical Fact of Women’s Ministries in the Early Church,” <http://www.johnwijngaards.com/courses 2/womentradition/trad03.shtml> (accessed December 5, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women’s Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 114.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 117.

In this contemporary era, circumstances may have improved since God established certain laws and rules, to protect widows. But, there remains the need for support, whether it is by a trained counselor, pastor, chaplain or in a support group or ministry organized in a local congregation.

According to Teterud there are a few major organizations that specially deal with issues of widows and continue to be in existence. Because, they are dated it is important to briefly mention the title of this organizations and the person responsible for organizing it.

On February 25, 1962, nine months after Bob's death sixty five interested persons attended the first meeting organized by Mrs. Bea Decker of Penn Hills, Pennsylvania was frustrated by the lack of any meaningful support system for widows. Her Lutheran denomination provided no formal support for widows, and she was convinced that her denomination promised nothing for widows in the future. The name of the ministry was titled 'They Help Each Other Spiritually,' (THEOS).<sup>70</sup>

There is also the 'To Live Again' (TLA) organization, which had its first conference in Philadelphia in 1973. The conference was designed to address the financial, legal, spiritual, and emotional needs of the newly widowed. The success of this conference led to the birth and growth of a national organization that seeks to help widows 'to live again.'<sup>71</sup>

For an update searching for a historical development of widow's ministries on the internet was accessible in light of little to no information on when they were actually started, which contributed to the failure of tracing how far back people had concern for widows' issues. In addition there are countless number of widows ministries around the world; however, there are less in rural regions of the United States. I have identified globally and locally countless number of widow's ministries doing some outstanding

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<sup>70</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 91.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 90.

work on behalf of widows. For example, “The Congo Widows Mission Project,” has both a global and local connection.

The idea for the NCC Congo Widows Mission Project came from a chance meeting in the cafeteria at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta. NCC Women’s Ministries coordinator Mary Jo Lauderdale met Pastor Gasore, “Jean” Bazungu, ministerial secretary of the North East Congo Attached Territory. As they talked, Pastor Bazungu described the great needs of the 450,000 widows in his territory, including numerous Seventh-day Adventists. Many women have lost their husbands due to wars and HIV/AIDS. Others have been abandoned by their husbands after the women were assaulted by tribal enemies. Pastor Bazungu wept as he described how these women struggle to provide for themselves and their children.

Lauderdale’s heart was moved by the plight of the women. With a Master’s degree in biblical counseling, she has conducted grief and loss seminars nationwide. After returning to California, Lauderdale began rewriting her syllabi and presentations for the Congo widows. Her materials were translated into three languages and are now used as evangelistic tools throughout the region.<sup>72</sup>

While it shows that concerns for developing program are lacking for this population it is good to know how far the concerns of widows have come; that overcoming barriers and getting help are managed appropriately with care.

### **Social Status Analysis**

The Agingstats.Gov website report on marital status for older Americans in 2010 pointed out, “Widowhood was more common among older women than among older men in 2010. Women age 65 and over were three times as likely as men of the same age to be widowed, 40 percent compared with 13 percent. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent of

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<sup>72</sup>Northern California Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, “The Congo Widows Mission Project,” <http://www.nccsda.com/article/198/departments/women-s-ministries/programs/the-congo-widows-mission-project> (accessed 5 December 2015).

women age 85 and over were widowed with 35 percent of men.<sup>73</sup> These statistics for the most part raises a concern for most widows in that she retain her social status where it was prior to the loss of her husband. More recent statistics are in an article by Elizabeth Olson, “Your Money: New Widows Have Another Concern: Their Finances,” said, “The household income for widows typically declines 37 percent after a spouse dies, far more than the 22 percent income drop that men experience, according to government figures. The assets of widows also tend to fall substantially more than widowers.”<sup>74</sup>

In India there is the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. The Act “was passed, legalizing the remarriage of widows, and declaring the issues of such marriage as legitimate. The Widow House was set up by social welfare agencies to ameliorate their conditions and to offer them new opportunities . . . In present day remarriage is a necessity and conservative ideas ingrained by force of custom should be dispelled.”<sup>75</sup> What has happened here was the removal of old myths and customs on remarriage, which are no longer compulsory for widows and it paves the way for her to retain a level of dignity in her culture.

Feelings effecting the social status of widows are numerous; somewhere I read, she feels that her “other half of self is missing.” Ginsburg writes, “So it is not entirely a condition of self-pity or paranoia that causes the widow to feel a misfit. It is fact that half

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<sup>73</sup> AgingStats.Gov, “2010 Older Americans : Key indicators of Well-Being,” Federal Interagency Forum on Aging Related Statistics  
[http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main\\_Site/Data/Data\\_2010.aspx](http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main_Site/Data/Data_2010.aspx) (accessed January 18, 2016).

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Olson, “New Widows Have Another Concern: Their Finances,” New York Times, September 4, 2015 [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/05your-money/new-widows-have-another-concern-their-finances.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/05your-money/new-widows-have-another-concern-their-finances.html?_r=0) (accessed December 9, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> Mishra, “Women Empowerment: Issues Related To Widowhood.”

of a couple does not equal one; it equals 50 percent of one. Because we live in a coupled world, no one who has lived the coupled life with any degree of satisfaction can properly project the stark reality of non-coupled life.”<sup>76</sup> Most widows do appear to make a reasonable adjustment over a period of time like those in my planning group. However, they will tell you it was difficult and the journey of widowhood has its challenges: dating again, deciding to enter an intimate relationship, vacationing familiar places to name a few. The new identity of widowhood has placed the women in a class that has altered the perception of others and has often forced her to perform against her will. Society has labels that are either negative or positive depending on the individual’s level of understanding the grieving process. As stated earlier, the perceptions can be unlearned.

### **Economic Analysis**

A major concern of widowhood is related to the unpreparedness of women after the death of their spouse. Their economic status in most cases decreases immediately. If she is employed she may have an easier time of making ends meet, but with some struggles, especially when she was not accustomed to budgeting her income.

The initial response is to seek out the assistance of government programs like Social Security Administration (SSA), if applicable military benefits, Retirement Pensions and others, depending on the age of the widow. She “qualifies for \$250 from SSA for burial purposes. Since the average charge for a traditional funeral is \$4,493, this is only a token payment from the government.”<sup>77</sup> And this might be the only benefit received from SSA if you are under age 60. Otherwise, you may qualify for Social

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<sup>76</sup> Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow*, 141.

<sup>77</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 79.

Security Income (SSI) under strict guidelines. It is important to recognize that Social Security initially did not consider widows; it was intended to protect women with children of deceased husbands.

Ginsburg, explains, “You’ll read that women hold over half the wealth in this country and also that women constitute the poorest of the population. Poorest is more like it—women over age 65 make up the greatest part of the poverty population—with death of a spouse or divorce as the root.”<sup>78</sup> Like Beverly, her husband took care of the bills and this can be interpreted as a traditional responsibility in a society where men take care of the money.

Sevak, Weir, and Willis pointed out:

Despite increased labor force participation rates among women and reforms under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. Widowhood remains an important risk factor for transition into poverty, although somewhat less so than 20 years ago. Women widowed at younger ages are at risk for economic hardship, and their situation declines with the duration of widowhood. We also find that women in households that are least prepared financially for widowhood are at greatest risk of a husband death, because of the strong relationship between mortality and wealth.<sup>79</sup>

Kimberly Foss pointed out the following statistics on widows financial adjustments based on data from a study reported by advisors. “For example, 55% of widows (vs. 34% of widowers) reported challenges adjusting to a change in income level, and 38% of widows (24% of widowers) reported needing to cut discretionary spending. Also of some concern: 21% of widows (compared with 10% of widowers) said they were

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<sup>78</sup> Ginsburg, *Widow to Widow*, 123.

<sup>79</sup> Sevak, Weir and Willis, “The Economic Consequences of a Husband’s Death.”

no longer saving adequately for retirement.”<sup>80</sup> Meaning widowhood can have a negative impact for some women depending on prior circumstances before widowhood.

On the other hand the Health and Retirement Study report by Weir and others pointed out “that women widowed in their 50s were more likely to have been poor before widowhood, and suffered greater loss of assets and pension income compared with women widowed after age 70. A substantial part of pension accrual and retirement savings occurs in the years preceding retirement, so early widowhood prevents future growth in resources as well.”<sup>81</sup> Meaning the length of widowhood has negatively impacted a woman’s economic status.

The economic status of widows continues to have traditional and cultural aspects interwoven in the way she survives after the loss of her husband for many women. They are still dependent on family for security and momentary support especially in rural regions of this country. Property rights and home ownership is still the property of males. In other less develop countries widows have no rights to property and this is understood even before marriage. The return of dowry and other assets belong to the deceased husband’s family. In those countries written wills are not honored even if the dead husband wanted his widow to inherit portions of the property. In essence, the widow is at the mercy of a son and for that reason a male child is considered valuable.

The consensus that seems to be emerging from studies is that widows themselves must take charge of their financial circumstances as soon as possible by getting advice from a financial planner, from family and friends, and know that others cannot replace

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<sup>80</sup> Kimberly Foss, “Work Smarter with Widows.”

<sup>81</sup> Sevak, Weir and Willis,” The Economic Consequences of a Husband’s Death.”

the security and comfort lost with the deceased spouse. In *The New York Times* September 4, 2015 in an article entitled “Your Money: New Widows Have Another Concern: Their Finances,” Janice Eiler, 58, shared that her husband died in November 2013 and she continues to juggle her life with her one income. Mrs. Eiler said, “Her husband did not sit down and had a conversation about their finances.” She maintained “Women need to know where things are – life insurance policies, safe deposit boxes and keys, investment accounts – all of it. We also tell women they should have their own accounts, an extra stash of money that’s not just for emergencies and their own credit cards.”<sup>82</sup>

While widows are experiencing economic challenges, “The SSA and any other government program needs to be attentive to the economic plight of widows. Wesley Teterud’s analysis of the situation states that it is: “Unfortunate, [that the] churches offer very little by way of resources and support for widows. The secular community offers a little more, but overall there is not much help available to widows.”<sup>83</sup> I contend that the church can do more by networking and compiling a list of resources from the secular community.

### **Health Analysis**

There are considerable data on the health of widows in recent decades comparing women and men after the loss of a spouse. “Many of the critical issues surrounding widowhood have to do with its consequences, particularly in regard to health as it relates

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<sup>82</sup> Olson, “New Widows Have Another Concern.”

<sup>83</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 84.



to mortality, psychological well-being and social relations.”<sup>84</sup> The discussions seem to point to the level of social activity of individuals that bring on depression, because of isolation and neglect. Along similar lines, “a higher rate of mental illness exists among widows than their counterparts,”<sup>85</sup> writes Trivedi and his colleagues in an article entitled “Psychological Aspects of Widowhood and Divorce.” The report stresses that increased social activity can help the widow to not go into what is called “complicated grief,” which will require professional care from a trained therapist at which time the widow's chances of getting over her loss is much more difficult.

A report published in *Agenda*, a publication of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in 2001 by Andrew J. Weaver and Harold G. Koenig stated, “Approximately 15 percent of elderly Americans experience a major depression and the rate is almost 25 percent in nursing homes . . . Major depression is usually associated with a predominately sad mood, helpless feelings, pessimistic thinking, loss of the ability to experience pleasure, sleep disturbance, agitation, irritability, or restlessness, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and loss of self-worth or feeling like a burden.”<sup>86</sup> There is no reason not to think that widows are first among the statistics and are experiencing these emotional feelings during the grieving process. Dickison in her article wrote, “Depression is a hard thing to handle alone. It can result from losses like a death or changes in independence, economic stress,

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<sup>84</sup> “Widowhood – The Consequences of Widowhood,” <http://medicine.jrank.org/pages/1841/Widowhood-consequences-widowhood.html> (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyani, “Psychological Aspects of Widowhood.”

<sup>86</sup> Andrew J. Weaver and Harold G. Koenig, “Special on Depression in later Years: Depression and Suicide Among Older Adults: The Need for a Faith-Based Response, in *Agenda, Newsletter of the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* no. 95 (April 2001), 2.

[and] chronic illness or even from taking certain medication . . . Even though depression is a major cause and can be reversed, other medical causes need to be eliminated.”<sup>87</sup>

Whatever the signs, they are often viewed as normal signs of grieving. Yes, no one can tell a grieving person to move on or even that it is time to get back into the swing of life, since grief is a lifelong experience. Therefore, caregivers need to be attentive to specific signs, especially habits the person did not have prior to the loss of her husband. As stated previously, substance abuse and insomnia are red flags; when observed these may be signs of difficulty in grieving loss.

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<sup>87</sup> Dickison, “Depression—A normal Health Problem,” 3.

## CHAPTER 4 BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Prophet Jeremiah prayed to the Lord after purchasing a plot of land. In the prayer he acknowledges God as the maker of heaven and earth by God's power and outstretched arm. He believed in an all mighty God, whose strength would hold him, because nothing is too hard for God (Jeremiah 32:16-17). What an awesome faith, the prophet prayed. As a widow, I have had moments of doubts and fears, but never about God's presence. Jeremiah's example of prayer continues to remind me that nothing is too hard for God. It was God who brought Israel out of the land of slavery by signs and wonder, with a strong hand and outstretched arms (32:21). God gave the people the land with everything they needed; it was flowing with "milk and honey." Yet, Israel was disobedient and followed her own plans disregarding the commandments of God.

Often people cannot imagine having all they need and needing nothing. Christians have hope because God is always up to something in the life of God's people and creation. Karen Baker-Fletcher put it this way, "God is present, and not far off, in our imaginative and constructive processes. There is no place where God is not present. When words fail and hope falters, experience of the power of life remains because God is everlastingly responding to creation internally and externally. God is available, even

when it may not seem like it, to strengthen the heart and keep it from fainting.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Emmanuel is with us at all times.

On a personal note, while I was going through my grieving process, my faith in God was a continuous source of strength. Did I wander off the path to do my own “thing,” whatever that was at the moment? Yes! However, eight years have passed, and I realize God was up to something “good,” and that I must walk alongside other widows in their journey of grieving. God is on my side with outstretched arms bringing me to a new season in my life. Like Jeremiah prayed after he received the deed to the land, I pray that other widows receive the deed to a new lifestyle. I have come to accept—widowhood. James Cone wrote in *God of the Oppressed*, “When we are broken and oppressed God stabilizes and liberates us from the forces in our lives. God becomes everything that the people need in order to sustain their lives with dignity. He is the One that the people can ‘tell all about their troubles.’ And in the act of telling one’s story to God, fellowship with the divine is established, and thus believers become aware that God has not left them alone.”<sup>89</sup> As a Chaplain, I have come to believe that God is at work in the life of every human being. God is everywhere. God has given strength to all people as witnesses to how much God cares.

The believer’s life is about God’s grace. I believe God wants to do something new in the life of widows, who have lost husbands. Their grief after the death of a loved one is an emotion all humans will experience. My pocket edition of Webster’s Dictionary says,

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<sup>88</sup> Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006) 17.

<sup>89</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 132.

“Grief is deep sorrow; pain.”<sup>90</sup> Grief as we know it is a never-ending process. However, prior to this is mourning, which leads to grieving. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:2 there is “a time to be born and a time to die;” again in Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed for “mortals to die once and after the judgment.” These Scriptures speaks to an experience that affects the life of those who must go through the mourning and grieving stages. Widows experience an unusual “time of weeping . . . and a time of mourning . . .” (Ecclesiastes 3:4-5). Grief never ends, but there is hope. The hope is that God enters the vulnerable spaces of our loneliness, anger, hurt and disappointments while we discover the self-worth that is in us. This hope is not a personal hope it is the kingdom of God’s reign in the life of people. Ted Campbell wrote, “It is a vision of the transformation of the earth until God’s hope, justice, mercy, and love prevail throughout the whole.”<sup>91</sup>

God is up to something. An example is the Book of Ruth when three women lost their husbands to death. In this telling story, we read God had acted in the life of three widowed women. They were living under the conditions where judges ruled and famine was present. These three widows were subjected to traditional and cultural norms. For two of them, tradition helped then in overcoming their plight as women going into an Israelite community to reclaim property. Ruth had converted to Judaism, her mother-in-law’s faith. Both Orpah and Ruth were Moabites and Naomi was an Israelite; they lived in a patriarchal society where husbands even in death maintained ownership of land and possibly of other property. These women had no apparent protection or security even though they had land they could not rightly own, without the next of kin being a male

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<sup>90</sup> *Webster Dictionary* (1958 Edition), s. v. “grief.”

<sup>91</sup> Ted A. Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999) 82.

giving consent. There Naomi and Ruth found favor by the hands of Boaz, their kinsman redeemer. In Ruth's narrative are several themes to ponder: security, protection, welcome, hospitality and love. In each of these Ruth and Naomi experienced as a result of meeting Boaz their kinsman redeemer. In the words of Ignatius of Antioch to the Bishop of Smyrna, "Widows must not be neglected. After the Lord, you must be their guardian."<sup>92</sup> Meaning the Church is called to care for widows.

As pointed out in the Bible by Jesus himself as an example, he said "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt 25:35-36). God through Jesus knows our needs and provides the resources. However, it is through the hands of people around us Ignatius is pointing to. The images in this text seek to heal the total being, especially those, who are vulnerable and marginalized in society. By doing so we are providing the spiritual and physical food needed to experience God's eternal Kingdom in the here and now on the earth. Christians may interpret this as Jesus offering up this passage as a means of pushing us beyond our comfort zone to be caring Christians. He does not simply pose a situation and not put himself in the midst. Rather it is an example of a Christian's duty; otherwise his message is not the Good News.

In Luke 18:1-3, Jesus told a parable to the people saying, "That men always ought to pray and not lose heart." The details of the parable involved a judge who did not fear God and had no regard for man. But there was a widow in that city; seeking justice from him, whom she called "my adversary." This widow could have remained quiet, but she

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<sup>92</sup> William M. Clements, ed., *Ministry with the Aging* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 40.

was causing trouble for the judge, who had the authority to provide justice, but the widow kept coming back, because he continually withheld justice from her. She spoke out for herself. In the end, God intervened on her behalf avenging her worries [case]. In this passage there is a bigger picture, we in the Church have a responsibility to inspire like Jesus Christ to advocate for the human rights of those where justice is routinely denied almost daily. It is God's "own elect," the poor and powerless who cry out day and night to Him [God]," because they are the invisible in our community and churches. When they speak out, they want to be heard. If they don't speak out, we have the power [Holy Spirit] to speak for them.

### **A Biblical Call to Care for widows**

The word of God is at the heart of the Christian Church and through its proclamation the Good News of Jesus Christ guides our faith and actions. God continuously calls God's people to obey the Commandments, which are written. The Bible is a manual on how we are to conduct our lives. Matthew 7:24, says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." The Bible is clear about how Christians are to respond to the word—and those in need. This project has identified a group of widows who have needs in their faith community.

Widows grieving the loss of a loved one can be the most difficult experience in life—without exception. God's heart is with the widow as she grieves. God talked about widows and that they ought to be cared for by those in authority.

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 25: 5-10 the narrative refers to the brother of the dead husband marrying the brother's wife according to Levirate Marriage. The Lord deemed it justice that widows are protected since they lost their protection and provider.

In Isaiah 1:17, “the chorus of prophetic voices by serving notices to the sinful nation of Israel to repent and treat widows fairly. The sin of neglecting widows in the land had permeated the highest levels of government. (Isa. 1:23; 9:16-17; 10:1-2).”<sup>93</sup> There are additional verses that prove God’s compassion and care. For example:

- Psalms 146:9 says “The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widows, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”
- Proverbs Isaiah 1: 17 says, “Learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, [and] plead for the widow.”
- “Thus says the Lord of host: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor, and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.”

Clearly the voice of God was spoken through these prophets that the Lord has a heart for those suffering as well as the widow. It is easy to see that the Word of God gives instructions on how we are to minister to the needs of God’s people—spiritually, socially, emotionally, financially, mentally and physically.

The words of the Bible address those who are easily victimized by fraud and cunning individuals. It provides a moral code of conduct to love those we may not know intimately because in need we show compassion and hospitality. The Lord provided security and protection just as God did for Ruth and Naomi through the actions of Boaz. Ruth and Naomi were unable to claim their inheritance; but God inspired a man to advocate on their behalf. In the process they received love, honor, respect and dignity. Ruth and Naomi became the descendants of Jesus. In a prophetic voice the writer of the

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<sup>93</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 7.



text pointed out, the child born was the “restorer of life and a nourisher of your [Naomi] old age. As it turns out, a series of welcomes unfolds. Ruth and Naomi are welcomed into Boaz’s house, and all three of them welcome the birth of a child, who will become the grandfather of King David. In the gospel hospitality, welcomes unfold, one upon another.”<sup>94</sup>

The Old Testament narratives have set the stage for ministry with widows. In Deuteronomy 24:7 “The widows, garment should not be taken from her . . . When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it, it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so the Lord may bless you in all your undertakings.” Perhaps the ways of caring for widows have changed over centuries, but the message remains the same.

God’s heart of love for widows continues in the New Testament. One of the most encouraging stories is found in Luke 7:11-15 “Jesus raises the widow’s son from the dead in Nain . . . As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came forward and touched the bier, and he bearers stood still. The text said Jesus had compassion for her. This is the kind of compassion we are called to have as Christians. I will even go further, an only son, what did that mean for this widow in a patriarchal society? It was, Jesus’ way of seeing that this widow maintain a level of living because the crowd was looking at her. The text does not say, but it is possible Jesus

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<sup>94</sup> Amy G. Oden, *God’s Welcome: Hospitality for a Gospel-Hungry World* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 35.

saved her from the shame and abandonment she may have gotten from her community. We don't know but her crying and weeping spoke volume to Jesus as he saw her needs.

In 1 Timothy 5: 3-10, a widow is honored in terms of her longevity, her role was verified, and her age and sensuality considered. Widows were asked to register her needs: emotional, financial, physical and spiritual. This is probably the most relevant narrative in the Bible for this project—that the Church has a mandate to demonstrate care.

We must not fail to mention the greatest model of care that was rendered in John 19:26-27, “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciples whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.’” This is the account of Jesus entrusting his [grieving] mother to the care of his dear friend, John.”<sup>95</sup> It also shows that children must show the same compassion to their mothers as well as others.

The biblical mandate to care for widows cannot be understated. God's concern continued in the early Church, in Acts 6, seven were chosen to serve. In verse one the Hellenists complained about the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food, and the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task.” Theologically, the widows spoke out concerning their needs. The seven were men of moral conscience, willing to do what was right. These servant leaders were willing to demonstrate spiritual

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<sup>95</sup> Teterud, *Caring for Widows*, 8.

and physical care to widows, who felt neglected and isolated in their community of faith. According to Justo L. Gonzalez both the Greeks and Hellenists were all Jews, but had different customs—“their faith and religious practice may not be entirely orthodox.”<sup>96</sup>

Spiritual care is best done when the community is aware of its biblical responsibility. Gonzalez, says “the Church can find a dozen ways to tell ethnic minorities as well as other marginalized people [widows] that they are welcome in the church, that their presence is [not] a problem. The structures and practices are amenable to the needs of others. The church is then operating in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>97</sup> In the congregation that “vulnerable space” of emotions is very sensitive for widows. The need exists that the Church provide the *Kairos*, “a community,” a time to care for widows based on the biblical faith and practice of caring people; a community with like-minded faith individuals willing to take on the challenges of others.

During the time of the immediacy of loss, being surrounded by family, friends, and church folks are all welcoming signs of caring. Their presence and support are the traditional acts of responding to the mourner in a critical time of loss. Everyone is there to hold your hand and to pat you on the shoulders. However, as time would have it the emotions of mourning began to turn to grieving—denial and anger. The community of people, who were present and encouraging initially, has moved on to their normal daily activities. The widow is feeling the emotions of abandonment and loneliness to deal with her plight. She may feel her faith community of believers is not reaching out enough to

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<sup>96</sup> Justo L. Gonzales “Reading from My Bicultural Place: Acts 6:17,” in *Reading from this Place* vol. 1, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 142.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

her, when often they are not equipped to embrace the signs of loss—mourning and grieving.

We cannot love the church and hate ourselves at the same time if it seeks to be a sacred haven of peace for widows and those in need. According to James H. Evans Jr., “As it subsists within the kingdom of God, the church must be ‘a fellowship of righteousness,’ as Walter Raushenbush insists. The church must be both to be holy, *koinonia*, and the body of Christ because holiness must be thought of, like health in both social and physical bodies, in terms of balance and harmony.”<sup>98</sup>

If the Church desires to be a place where people come and are made whole from their pain and hurt, then caring for the widow is one way of fulfilling the biblical mandate of our Christian responsibility. To ignore this group is like building a house on sand.

### **Problems in Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care by those volunteering their time to care for others is not an impossibility. The warm-hearted people of Butler Church are compassionate and giving. The women in my planning group and others are seeking to be an encouragement and support for one another. Inherent in self-help support groups are concerns. The group is not a therapy group for addressing and identifying individual issues of grieving and this ought to be stressed repeatedly as the group grows. It is important that those volunteering to support others become aware of the basic human conditions of that group.

Patton writes certain situation calls for “wisdom, presences and guidance.” According to him these three concepts works together in the practice of caring for

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<sup>98</sup> James H. Evans Jr., “Constructive Proposals: Race, Body, Space, and Time: Ecclesiological Reflections,” in *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*, ed. Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 226.

another. During this project the volunteers were encouraged to develop these skills as they seek to care for one another. “The pastoral wisdom that expresses knowledge, presence, and guidance requires attention to the immediate situation of the patient or parishioner, her loss, her illness or whatever has separated her from the larger faith community.”<sup>99</sup> The church, says Kenneth L. Swetland, is an “agent of healing in the lives of the broken people who make up the church.”<sup>100</sup> There must be some basic training for volunteers in leading any support group. I recommend a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education or the Stephen Ministry as good starting programs. Volunteers need to have a level of recognizing interpersonal awareness of one’s boundaries.

There must be a basic structure in place to carry out the vision, purpose, and mission. If the training and structure are not in place you can create an atmosphere of confusion as to “who will do what.” Patton wrote, “My concern here is to suggest that an ongoing experience of learning to care is important for every caring community, and the responsibility for involving members in it is the responsibility of the community’s teaching elder.”<sup>101</sup> In addition Patton does put responsibility on the volunteer to be involved in a “didactic component with reading and lectures on topics relevant to human problems or to the personal and spiritual development of the participants.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Patton, *Pastoral Care*, 48.

<sup>100</sup> Kenneth L. Swetland, *Facing Messy Stuff in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 11.

<sup>101</sup> Patton, *Pastoral Care*, 107.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

## Spiritual Practices

An awesome opening to the spiritual life of widows is found in Luke 2: 36-38. A prophet by the name of “Anna, the daughter of Phanuel . . . Having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for redemption of Jerusalem.” In this passage Anna was a committed Christian not only to God but to her faith after her loss, which for many is a very difficult process. We question God and may even become bitter. For Anna, staying in the temple was an act of sacrifice and worship.

Yet, it is good to remind ourselves that prayer and fasting connects us to a power higher/greater than ourselves. Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 said,” Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”<sup>103</sup> Anna’s story is unlike other widows in the Bible in that it does not write she was in economic distress or even she had practical needs. She was a widow, who had no children [son] to protect her. She is old. In her circumstances her needs were to be in the temple [church] to worship, pray and fast.

Or is it that we [widows], like Anna, yearn in the deepest part of ourselves to draw nearer to God! Do we speak a personal encounter with the holy? Do we dare to believe that Jesus might offer us this gift? Will we, like Anna, find Jesus in the sanctuary? And wherever we find Jesus, and

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<sup>103</sup> Swetland, *Facing Messy Stuff*, 101-102.

however we come to behold the something we long for, yet so surprising, freshly, and lovely in its manifestation, won't we wish to tell everyone!<sup>104</sup>

Robin Gallaher Branch, in her article "Anna in the Bible," points out:

The Biblical text, however, contains clues regarding her [Anna] appearance and character. Her lifestyle of fasting may indicate thinness; her ability to walk around the Temple indicates her fitness and that her eyesight and hearing are intact; her designation as a prophetess indicates her spiritual acuity; her talk of the child to those interested in the redemption of Jerusalem indicates her deep connection with a likeminded community.

With this in mind, Anna shows one model of aging in the Biblical text. Luke presents her positively, as a woman without the bitterness that may come with age and as one full of hope. As she moves throughout the Temple, no doubt she seeks to do good to those whom she encounters.<sup>105</sup>

In John 5: 17, Jesus healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath.

His actions cause a controversy among him and the religious leaders; they were telling him he was violating the law. Like those leaders, we too get religion and spirituality confused, making our lives out of sync with what God desires for us. However, spirituality allows us to touch or draw us into God's presence unlike religion. The lame man was able to walk, but there was an even greater healing—spiritual healing.

Spirituality is like music in the life of widows. Ken Gurie puts it like this—"it makes us feel good and whole and connected to something larger than us."<sup>106</sup>

It's a life that asks God to reach into our heart, allowing Him to touch us there, regardless of the pleasure it excites or pain it inflicts. It's a life that reaches back, straining to touch the hem of Christ's garment, allowing

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<sup>104</sup> Jane J. Parkerton, K. Jeanne Person, and Anne Winchell Silver, *Where You Go, I Shall* (Cambridge, MA: Crowley Publications, 2005), 75.

<sup>105</sup> Robin Gallaher Branch, "Anna in the Bible," Bible History Daily, April 19, 2013, Biblical Archaeology Society, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/anna-in-the-bible/> (accessed December 11, 2015).

<sup>106</sup> Ken Gire, *Seeing What Is Sacred: Becoming More Spiritually Sensitive to the Everyday Moments of Life* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 2006), 178.

Him to turn and call us out of the crowd, regardless of how humiliating it is to stand before Him or how uncertain we are as to what He will say.<sup>107</sup>

This reminds me of the passage, “.... Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning (Ps 30:5).”

Lastly, we can all learn from the feminist movement what the biblical mandate for caring for widows should look like. Letty M. Russell in *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* pointed out,

. . . spirituality of connection to communities of faith and struggle, connect us to God. To ourselves, and to our neighbors in the margins of life but also how to recognize the grace-filled moments when experience the coming together of the bits and pieces of our lives in a way that transcends the sum of the parts and nurtures the connections . . . These moments may happen in prayer, in church worship, in retreat, at dinner, in bed, on quiet walks in the woods, or on marches to Washington . . . in [much] unexpected ways.<sup>108</sup>

It is during these moments of spiritual practice, widows are able to experience joy and peace.

### **Efforts to Bring About Transformation and Participation**

The proclamation of the Good News holds the key to transformation and participation for all of God’s people. The word of God continues to provide instructions and it is the source of our faith and practice as believers. The biblical mandate is for us in the voice of the Apostle Paul, who is appealing to us by the mercies of God, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is acceptable, which is spiritual worship. “Do not be transformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what is good and acceptable and perfect

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>108</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993), 202.



(Romans 12:1-2).” This appeal stems from all of what God has done for us. God has made the ultimate sacrifice for us by giving God’s only Son. God knows we humans cannot live a perfect life outside of accepting the gift of mercies. The heart and mind of humanity is wicked; that is why the Apostle Paul is pleading for believers to accept God’s means of salvation. If left to the physical body, none of us will experience eternal [quality] life in our human circumstances, which applies also to widows. Widows in their human condition are created in the image of God and deserve the gifts of compassion and care. Therefore, the apostle is saying, in all of our actions worship God in the beauty of holiness Ps. 29:2, (KJV) or splendor (NRSV) depicting a transformed faith community.

The life of widows are altered the day their loved one died; she became a woman with a new identity—widow. Her expressions are “... looking quite desolate, her face reflecting the sense of loss that stormed within her. Soon she began to put into words what was so obvious from her experience.”<sup>109</sup> The keys to her identity are often in the ideals of others and when it is shaken she attempts to recover often alone. The women in my planning group, Beverly in my case study, Ruth and Naomi, the widow in Nain, Anna and all of the un-named women in the statistics all of those women know what it means to be a widow, each of them wanted to “experience joy and wholeness.”<sup>110</sup> Widows are real people, who want real transformation. Transformation like any growing occurs in stages, and no one can tell a widow, when to move on after her loss.

Widows are tearing down barriers in their circumstances so that they begin the path of full participation. “The church therefore has to be a place that enables individuals

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<sup>109</sup> H. Norman Wright, *Recovering from Losses in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 145.

<sup>110</sup> Russell, *Church in the Round*, 202.

to rediscover their lost identity, this means that both culture and Christianity work hand in hand. The church has to establish the support groups that have a common ground on issues of widowhood.”<sup>111</sup> The faith community has to be a place that tears down myths and stereotypes of widows as old 65+ year old women, that sits in the pews having nothing to contribute. Furthermore, the gospel message has to be taken seriously, “The early Christians made conscious efforts to protect the destitute, or those who had fallen in status and resources. Like widows and orphans . . . be all-embracing. In other words not only must it encompass feeding, healing, housing and justice for the downtrodden; it must also empower him/her to recover in every department of life.”<sup>112</sup>

Michael Sowu in *Challenges of African Widowhood*, pointed out, “After transiting from several days, weeks, months and, in some cases, years of physical and psychological trauma following the loss of a loved one, a widow has every right to enjoy life again like any other normal human being. The stigma of death and its aftershocks must give way to a fresh lease of life. Rendered in biblical terms, ‘the broken bones must vibrate once more’ (cf. Ps. 51:8).”<sup>113</sup> Even though Sowu was describing the situations of the African widows and their plight, his writing is appropriate here by noting, “The church of Christ, God’s agent of redemption and transformation, appears to be her only hope in the midst of her seemingly hopeless situation. If the church succeeds in providing

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<sup>111</sup> Aupa Stephen Matsaneng, “The Traumatic Experience that Causes Women Wearing Black Garments to be Excluded from the Body of Christ: A Challenge to Pastoral Care” (master’s thesis, University of Pretoria, June 2009), 38.

<sup>112</sup> Michael Sowu. *Challenges of African Widowhood*, (Asafo, Kumasi, Ghana: Alpha & Omega Publications, 2009), 66.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 63.

the solace needed to alleviate the widow's plight, the former will be reckoned as a friend of the widow indeed."<sup>114</sup>

However, for Cone, "If the church is not free, if it is a distorted representation of the irruption of God's kingdom, if it lives according to the old order (as it usually has), then no one will believe its message,"<sup>115</sup> including widows.

In and throughout Galilee in the temples Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom of hope. In the gospel, people experience eternal life (quality life). "Jesus touched those afflicted with illness, loss, torment, and demonic possession; and he addressed both the personal and communal aspects these experiences. All of these are radical acts because they cross boundaries—including rather than excluding."<sup>116</sup> We need not search for examples of bringing transformation and participation in the life of widows. In the gospel people were resurrected physically and spiritually. The greatest of Jesus' teachings were in the Beatitudes in Matthew's gospel on the mountain he ministered to the whole person. According to Walter Brueggemann, "The alternative community knows it need not engage in deception. It can stand in solidarity with the dying, for those are the ones who hope."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>115</sup> James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1986), 131-132.

<sup>116</sup> Ted Peters, *Anticipating Omega: Science, Faith, and Our Ultimate Future* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 27.

<sup>117</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1.

## CHAPTER 5 GETTING STARTED

### **Goal 1 – To increase the awareness of the biblical, social, and emotional practice for “Care to Widows”**

(1) Preparing and distributing a questionnaire with a letter via mail to the pastor and leaders of Butler Church to identify, and measure the interest and awareness for the care of Butler’s widows. (2) I attended one United Methodist Women’s (UMW) meetings to bring about education and awareness and identifying those that are interested in being a part of the widows’ planning group. (3) I prepared one presentation utilizing available resources from the library and the internet to give to various groups, in particular the UMW’s group, further soliciting involvement in the project. (4) I facilitated three Bible Study sessions on the Book of Ruth. (5) I presented two preaching moments to the Butler Memorial congregation that further brought about the biblical awareness of caring for widows.

In February 2015 I had a meeting with the pastor to start the project. I followed up by mailing one questionnaire with a cover letter (see Appendix B) to the pastor after the meeting. On March 9, 2015, I met with the Church Council and presented this brief description of my project: (1) The title of the demonstration project, “A Pastoral Care Model for Caring for Widows;” (2) My personal experiences from which the project proposal was born for a Widows’ Ministry; (3) that the project was part of my professional and spiritual development towards a Doctor of Ministry degree; (4) The

Butler Church was selected as the site for my project proposal because of my connections to the congregation; (5) I asked that members of the Church Council complete a questionnaire; (6) Two members from the congregation are on my Site Team and they will be working with me to oversee the activities and to conduct a final evaluation of the project; (7) During the demonstration project there will be several events: a preached moment, a Bible Study, one workshop, a seminar and a retreat. In addition, as those events were planned and announced, the members of the congregation were asked to encourage widows to attend. Dates and time will be made available to the congregation using the worship bulletin with an inserted flyer; (8) The prayers of the council members were requested. Following our discussions of the project it was approved with blessings from the members of the Church Council. I then distributed thirty-nine questionnaires with a cover letter (Appendix B) attached to begin identifying and assessing the interest and awareness of the leaders—ten were returned.

On March 14, 2015, I presented a brief summary of the project proposal to the UMW organization. In my fifteen minute presentation I educated the women on the apparent isolation of widows in churches and that they needed a supportive community (widows are in large number in the pews and widows after the loss of a spouse tend to isolate themselves). After my presentation, I distributed thirty questionnaires with a cover letter (the same questionnaire that was distributed to the pastor and the church council in Appendix B) fifteen were returned. From the returned questionnaires nine were from widows who expressed an interest in participating in the project. I also followed up with an additional ten mailing of letters (see Appendix B) to widows that were identified by the Site Team Members inviting widows to participate in the planning group. I also

prepared flyers (see Appendix B) and had them distributed and inserted in the Sunday Worship bulletin as an additional source for identifying and recruiting widows for the project. This strategy resulted in 12-15 widows for the planning group.

### **I facilitated three Bible Study sessions on the Book of Ruth:**

Date: 4-22-2015 – **Session One**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Purpose of this study: These Bible Studies are to increase awareness of the biblical, social, and emotional practice caring for widows.

#### **Chapter One**

##### **Introduction:**

1. Overall the theme in the Book of Ruth depicts human tragedy and God's plan for redeeming God's people—in this book it happens to be widows.
2. The reader should make a conscious effort to place this in the time of the judges, when the Israelites went through cycles of faithlessness. By contrast Ruth was a faithful converted gentile.
3. Who was Ruth? Ruth was a Moabite, who became a foreigner among the people of Israel. Ruth and Orpah were married to Israelite men. The husbands of these two Moabite women died, to make matters even more defining, Ruth their mother-in-law also became a widow. So we see in the context of all of the husbands' deaths we have three widows left to find new meaning in life. Marriage to Moabites was not forbidden in the law. They were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.
4. The Book of Ruth is interesting because it concerns a single family. The plot revolves around family relationships between husbands, wives, children, in-laws, and extended relatives. It involves inheritance and ownership of property. A widow with no male family members would be in desperate circumstances in the ancient Middle-East.
5. Many theologians have written Naomi is the driving force in this book and Ruth was an instrument of God's plan. Naomi was also widowed and lived in a foreign land among the Moabites. It was both Naomi's and Ruth's inheritance that determined the genealogy of David and eventually to the birth of the Messiah.
6. Authorship of the book is unknown although some scholars have credited the prophet Samuel.

7. Date and place of composition of this Book is difficult to place. However, it opens “in the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land ... (v. 1).
8. The purpose of the Book: gives us God’s providence in the life of three widows during their plight to obtain a new life. This providence demonstrates how tragedies could turn our lives around for good. God brought two widows to a place where they received favor, protection, and security. It ultimately portrays loyalty and an abiding love between two women.

Read chapter 1:1-22, while reading the first chapter of Ruth, try to put yourself in Naomi’s place.

Reflection: Life hurts at times. There’s nothing very profound about this statement. At some point we all go through tough situations. As we read imagine the pain and suffering that surround us. Naomi and Ruth were feeling the crunch of desperation as to what to do after the death of their husbands.

Have you ever felt that God was against you because your world was crumbling around you?

NOTES:

Date: 4-29-2015 **Session Two**

Opening Prayer

Chapters two and three:

1. Every year during harvest time, the people would gather stalks of grain from the fields. God’s law made sure that the poor did not go hungry. The people gathering the grain had to leave some in the corners of the fields and they also had to leave behind any they dropped. The poor would come behind them to pick up the leftover grain. This was called gleaning, and it was one way God took care of all the people.
2. The term “widow” in ancient time was considered in a legal context. It was a way of dealing with widows justly or unjustly. It was the legal protection of the widow against the injustice and exploitation of her status (particularly when it had to do with inheritance of land). In the Old Testament, she was not to be exploited (Exodus 22:21-22; and Deuteronomy 24:27:19); she (the widow) was specifically permitted to glean the fields and vineyards during harvest time (Deuteronomy 24: 19-21).<sup>118</sup>
3. “The concept of widowhood was also used as a metaphor (symbol) to describe God’s relationship to Israel. When nations were judged in b. c. a devastated

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<sup>118</sup> Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, s. v. “widow.”

Jerusalem could be described as a widow, her husband, the Lord having departed, was as good as dead to her” (Lam 1:1; Ezekiel 11:22-23).<sup>119</sup> Meaning, in the weakest time of Jerusalem’s history, her strength was in God.

Widowhood had a significant theological meaning in how God translated God’s message. For us, it is important to recognize that widows in ancient times do not seem to be pervasive and the attitudes were not of powerlessness. It was simply, a way of life in a patriarchal society. Mainly, because “God had mercy on her and delivered her from the harsh oppression of Egypt. She was thus called to remember her liberation and to imitate her God who was not only the father of the orphan, but the legal defender of the widow (Psalm 68:6) and the guardian of her property (Proverb. 15:25).”<sup>120</sup>

4. In ancient times the people stored water in large pots or jars to keep it cool and fresh. When Boaz told Ruth to help herself to water, he was treating her with kindness.
5. Ruth and Boaz’s encounter at the threshing floor provokes a highly controversial discussion. Commentaries have suggested that it was a sexual encounter, where Ruth was seducing Boaz. Remember, it was Naomi, who had instructed Ruth to meet Boaz under that circumstance. Therefore, we may need to focus our attention on Naomi and not on Ruth (Read 2:1). Writers wrote it was a custom for young widows to lie at the feet of their next of kin. In any case Boaz became Naomi and Ruth’s redeemer.

Read chapters two and three, while reading, try to put yourself in Ruth’s place. Ruth meets Boaz on two occasions in the field gleaning and at the threshing floor.

Reflection: Naomi and Ruth in these two chapters had begun to see signs of hope in search of a new life. Ruth was very kind to Naomi and in turn Boaz was kind to Ruth. In what ways can we be kind to others? God continues to show God’s favor on us daily. In those Godly encounters are we amaze by God’s protection and security as widows?

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



Date: 5-6-2015 **Session Three**

Opening Prayer

Chapter four:

1. Boaz marries Ruth and the community leaders were involved in making the marriage a public affair according to Jewish law. Boaz proved to be an honest man.
2. Boaz did not go looking for the un-named next of kin. It was interesting that he just happened to be passing by as Boaz sat by the gate (v. 4:1).
3. The giving up of the sandal meant that the closer relative was willing to give up his right to own the property of the dead husband
4. Boaz's marriage to Ruth was more than a love story. "He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for you daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him" (V. 4:15).
5. The number seven in Jewish tradition means completion (v. 15). Naomi was restored to her community and the community began to nurture her.
6. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz are the descendants of David and eventually of Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, the place of Naomi's childhood

Read chapters four, while reading, try to put yourself in Boaz's place. He was the redeemer of Naomi and Ruth. Boaz was God's vessel in shaping Naomi and Ruth's new identity. The two widows were no longer seeking security, favor, protection, compassion and all of the provisions they needed as widows. Boaz did not have to marry Ruth. He knew that she could have married someone closer to her own age. He also knew that only a male relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, could take over Elimelech's responsibilities.

Reflection: Caring for a widow is a privilege and a manifestation of God's compassion.

Naomi was a symbol of the world. Ruth was a symbol of Christ's mercy and grace. Boaz was a symbol of the Church (faith community) that took care of two widows.

What are some of the ways widows can take care of themselves or what have you discovered about yourself?

What are some of the ways the Church can take care of its widows?

NOTES:

The total attendance for the three Bible Studies was thirty-eight. I distributed thirty-eight evaluation forms (see Appendix B) six were not returned. Each participant had an opportunity to make comments about the study. The following are comments from the participants after the study: (1) "The Bible Study was good information, may God bless you." (2) "Great, God is good all the time." (3) "God's favor, God's plan, used all the characters to achieve his purpose." (4) "Very in depth," (5) "I'm understanding the Book of Ruth," (6) "Ruth listening to Naomi's instruction in every way." (7) "Very Good," (8) "I am not widow but found much insight from study," (9) "I gain more understanding of the book."

In addition at the close of the third Bible Study the evaluation form (Appendix B) included this question: "What are the ways the Church can take care of widows?" The most significant data on the evaluations are the following responses noted on the evaluations: (1) "We need more Bible Study like this to talk about widows," (2) The "sharing," (3) "Having a widows Ministry," (4) "Believe in God; and go on trips sometime," (5) "Having these Bible classes does help us on our journey," (6) "Embrace them[widows] with love, attention," (7) "Develop a first response group to care for them [widows] from the first day to at least for a year of caring." (8) "We should be reaching out to former widows help in their needs." (9) "By being supportive in times of need," (10). These indicated among the planning group a need and desire for a widows' ministry.

On April 19, 2015, I accomplished another of my strategies by delivering **two preaching moments**: 8a.m. and 11a.m.

Sermon: “The Church Is Our Next-of-Kin”

Scripture Reading: Psalm 4:1-8 and Acts 3:12-19

Text: Ruth 4: 14-17

Prayer: Father God, we thank you for your words. Thank you for this preaching moment. As your Word goes forth, may our hearts and minds by the power of the Holy Spirit, speak into our life joy this day. In Jesus’s Name, Amen!

I want to lift up these four verses for your hearing this morning. Please turn with me to the Book of Ruth, chapter 4:14-17. “Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him. Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying. A Son has been born to Naomi.” For a few minutes, I want to meditate on “The Church is Our Next-of-Kin.”

In this post resurrection season, we are looking at the early Church. One of its missions was to make sure none were neglected. There are segments of society in need of the church’s service. And I believe strongly widows are among them. Therefore, I submit, the Church has the responsibility to care for the poor and needy, to bear the grief of widows, even with all its limitations. There are Abigails, Annas, Judiths, Naomis, Orpahs and Ruths present in our pews. Yes, I am speaking out of my own personal experience of loss. However, I don’t stand alone, there are others; my experience is much larger than my own, that care in a community of faith can transform life. Our healthy acceptance of life challenges with support that connects us to an Almighty God, and one another. Family members also have an obligation. Even widows themselves bear some personal responsibility for their new identity. Psychologists and sociologists tell us grief is a lifelong experience and persons never get over their loss, may it be a job, a friend, a parent, a child and yes a spouse. The signs of loss may have an effect on one’s personhood in several forms: spiritual, emotional, psychological, financial, medical and physical, which is grief. However, you can live beyond loss.

With this being said, as a congregation, reflect with me on the life of two widows—Naomi and Ruth. The writer describes a Jewish family in the days when there was a famine in the land under the rule of Judges. This particular family decided to relocate to a neighboring country called Moab. While in Moab the two sons marry Moabite women. As time passed, all of the men die leaving three widows to pick up the pieces of their lives and to fend for themselves. Naomi, the matriarch with her two-daughters-in-law, decided to return to her native city Bethlehem. The women, including Orpah are traveling

together back to Bethlehem. However, Naomi changes her mind, and tries to persuade both daughters-in-law to turn back, but Ruth refuses. She was willing to go to Bethlehem with Naomi.

Ruth did not give up, but chose restoration and nurture for her circumstances. Perhaps Naomi and Ruth woke up day after day struggling with the issues of their new identity, at no fault of theirs. There should not be any self-blame in being a widow. These women were living in a patriarchal society, where women did not inherit the possessions of their husbands. Naomi was aware of this custom more than Ruth. The option Naomi chose was the only possible solution available for her and Ruth, to return to her childhood hometown for security and protection. I can imagine Naomi thinking, if only I had one son, that I could inherit the estate of my dead husband. As destiny would take Naomi and Ruth, they instead found compassion and provision in their relationship.

Ruth's words are eloquent, her emotions powerful, her vow sincere. However, it reveals the grief of a young widow—the loss of a covenant relationship. Ruth had lost her husband Mahlon, Naomi's son. Ruth clings to Naomi because of her need to be in relationship, while Naomi feels the pain of her economic loss.

Perhaps a lesson to be learned, as widows we also have the responsibility to care for ourselves. As for Ruth, the most telling of her convictions were in her words "...your people shall be my people and your God my God." This tells me God was talking to Ruth. Sister Ruth, I believe, had an un-quenching conviction that gave her the ability to stand up to Naomi that came from God. She gave to us an example which widows must fight against sexism, social class, ageism, the cunning and scruples of evil in the world that preys on the weak and failures, who see widows as helpless women. We must take personal responsibility against all odds. I submit, Sister Ruth was focused on the provisions of God, when Naomi seemed to have lost hope in her God. Naomi at this time was up in age and wanted the physical security and favor her community was able provide. We must put our hope and trust in God.

Arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi instead of getting a warm welcome was questioned about her disposition of bitterness. Women are we caring towards others as they attempt to coexist in a community while establishing a new identity? Oftentimes we say, things do more harm than good. Are we willing to lend a listening ear? As a widow in a community of faith do you feel supported? Naomi turned her emotions inward, call me "Mara," I am bitter, look how the Almighty has treated me," she uttered. She began to use introspection. But I say to widows grief is a time to turn our attention to God. Seek those means of grace by encouraging yourself. To the Church, widows are women desiring restoration and nurture from a community to which they belong. The writer of Isaiah 1: 17 says, "Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow. Perhaps there are widows this morning, like Naomi, who are focusing on self. Facing life does not necessarily continue after the funeral, after the sympathy cards are read, and after the calls stopped coming.

Ruth, on the other hand, was a champion in her own right of God's love, compassion and provisions. She worked in the field among other widows and servants so she could obtain security and protection for herself and Naomi. Little did she realize, she would meet her kinsman redeemer. God was with her. I am reminded of Jesus' compassion for a widow in Nain whose only son died. Jesus raised the widow's only son from the dead. Jesus looks favorably on her. God promised never to leave us. Even in the valley and shadow of death God is there to lift us up. Ruth was an instrument of God's grace to Naomi, a widow taking care of another widow.

Furthermore, Ruth, the young widow, follows the advice of her mother-in-law by washing and anointing herself with fine oil. She goes to the threshing floor, a place women were not permitted without an invitation. There in the middle of the night she lays at the feet of her future husband. In this encounter, Ruth is a picture of obedience, an example of what Christians ought to do, remain focused on God's provisions of grace and mercy. I believe God does honor our obedience and faithfulness in times of making sacrifices on behalf of another.

Boaz was not only a wealthy man; he was a godly man. From the moment he saw Ruth, he was a wise counselor. He protected the young widow and perhaps even protected his name against scandals. Having heard of Ruth's compassion for her mother-in-law, Boaz revealed his relationship to Naomi and Ruth. For Naomi and Ruth, they have found their kinsmen redeemer in Boaz. This day, I submit the Church is our Next-of-Kin. The church can redeem those in need of restoration and nurturing. I don't know about you, but, I thank God, for Jesus Christ, our kinsman redeemer. I have redemption and favor with God through Jesus Christ; I have security and protection through Jesus Christ, according to his riches and glory. Ruth and Naomi I am sure relied on Boaz. However, we can rely on Jesus this morning as our kinsman redeemer. The Church is that vessel for God's ministry. In widowhood, we need not live in isolation with bitterness, but celebrate the person we have become in Jesus, who gives us strength. God welcomes your earnest prayers, your deepest pains, your deepest anguish. We are wonderfully made, in the image of an all loving God. Be encouraged, like Ruth care for one another in love. My sisters, weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning. So celebrate yourself. Take care of yourself. Know this: the Lord takes personal care of the faithful. The Lord will hear us when we cry out to him. God has not abandoned us. He promised: He promised never to leave us or forsake us. God is love. Jesus is love. Come Holy Spirit, come upon us now!

There is work to be done: The church is the ultimate picture of Christ—our kinsmen redeemer. Are we ready, willing and able to make self-sacrifices for another? As widows among the people of God, I submit, the Church of Jesus Christ is our protector. The story of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz was more than a love story. On the cross, Jesus charged John to care for his widowed mother. Are we willing to take on the character and life of the early Church? In Acts chapter 6, where seven were chosen to serve, are you too busy seeking other ministries in different places, forgetting those with in—our widows, our orphans, our most vulnerable and whoever else neglected, not benefiting from the ministry of

compassion? I believe Acts 6 is directing us to rethink the way we do church and to be the church of Jesus Christ, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Can you relate to Jesus' parable of the persistent widow who seeks justice? Can you relate to the poor widow who gave her last two coins into the Temple treasury?

My sisters and brothers, the Church is our extended family for the restoration of God's people. It is our divine calling. When one is grieving a loss, that loss becomes part of the community's responsibility. The Church has the power working within to accomplish abundantly far more than all it can ask or imagine, to him be the glory in Christ Jesus to all generations.

I say the Church is a living body of people to begin the process of embracing widows and one another, participating in seminars and workshops, equipping individuals, who are willing to stand in the gap, and in the place of a Naomi, a Ruth or a Boaz.

I believe this can be the finest hour for the body of Christ to claim its comfort zone, to care for widows, who are gleaning the fields for signs of God's favor, security and protection, may it be spiritual, emotional, physical, social, or financial in whatever way that they need can be performed. Because of Ruth's steadfast love, for Naomi in Judaism the number seven says made her complete in the birth of one boy child. Church has the character of a Boaz stand in the gap to represent Jesus our redeemer. For, this purpose I call on this congregation to establish a Widows' Ministry. A supportive and compassionate community can shields us during our grief. Amen!

Following the preached moments ten evaluation forms (see Appendix B) were randomly distributed to worshippers after both services. Of the twenty distributed, five were not returned. The overall comments from the fifteen returned evaluations for the preached moment showed a 99% excellent sermon. There was a 1% response that noted the sermon was above average. For the purpose of this report the significant comments after the preached moment for both services were meaningful. These are the comments: (1) "well presented;" (2) "the church has a vital role to play in this arena;" (3) "presented very accurately and good Bible knowledge;" (3) "It was a very good service;" (4) "I enjoyed the sermon, learn a lot and lot of things to think about was a blessing;" (5) "It will help me, if I become a widow;" (6) "Great message, thank God;" (7) "The sermon was very good."

## **Evaluation/Assessment**

As noted previously a total of seventy questionnaires were distributed to the pastor, members of the Church Council, and the UMW organization. The two-part questionnaire (part A and B), asked that all participants respond to part A and only widows respond to both part A and B. The questionnaires were identical for every participant in this project. There was also a letter mailed to ten identified widows to recruit participants for the planning group. These helped in recruiting 12-15 widows for the project.

The twenty-five returned questionnaires from the Church Council was somewhat alarming. Among the 25 questionnaires specific questions did show there is support and awareness in the congregation for a widows' ministry. By looking at several responses the numbers are fairly high. For example: Question C, "Are you aware of any Bible stories concerning widows in the Bible?" 14 of the 25 said, "Yes." And for question E, "Do you know a widow in our congregation?" 20 of the 25 said "Yes." This tells me there is a connection to widows, but to what extent is not known from the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

For the comment section on the evaluation forms for the preached moment and the Bible Study sessions it does show a need primarily from the widows themselves while there is a lack of biblical, social and emotional awareness for all of respondents.

In real time, I believe the preaching and Bible Study were prophetic moments that spoke to the life of the congregation as well as to widows. The preached moment and the Book of Ruth presented opportunities for the congregation to increase their biblical, social and spiritual awareness of the needs of widows and how to care for widows.

However, I do believe the five strategies increased the awareness of the biblical, social, and emotional practices for caring for widows at BMUMC.

## **Goal 2 – Recruit one Professional and one Volunteer and Lay-Persons**

1) Utilizing professionals to develop criteria for the participation of 12-15 widows for the planning group. [Note from here forward the planning group will be called a planning group, which was their function in this project]. (2) I conducted one visit to Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, NY (and several telephone calls) or another facility/agency (Visiting Nurse Services of New York) in the community to further recruit two bereavement counselors.in the Bronx, NY or another facility/agency in the community to further recruit two bereavement counselors.

To assist in implementing this project, I recruited a registered nurse, Milda Bailey, who had previously worked with bereaved persons in the congregation. I used her to facilitate the Widows' Ministry Seminar (see appendix F) on March 28, 2015. In addition, I recruited, Rev. Marcia Smith-White, who facilitated and lead the Widows' Ministry Retreat. She is a Pastor of a United Methodist congregation and a commission Deacon, Psychologist and a graduate of NYTS, Master of Divinity degree program.

Further, I visited and reached out to the Bereavement Department at Calvary Hospital, Bronx, NY for an appointment with the director; but this proved to be unsuccessful after several phone calls and left messages. I did some networking with another chaplain, and was referred to Ms. Luna Lovell, Bereavement Counselor at Calvary Hospital. Over the telephone I introduced myself and told her about my project but we were not able to agree on a time that was amenable for my planning group. She was not available on weekends for community outreach work.



I further reached out to the Visiting Nurses Services of New York as my second options for someone to come and make a presentation to my planning group. The agency was willing, but needed more advance notice. I also contacted WISER: The Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement at 1140 19<sup>th</sup> Street NW Suite 550 Washington, D.C Organization. Laurie G. Lindberg, Assistant Director of Programs she was very supportive in sending me a wealth of information/resources to help women. I was also directed to several web sites for additional resources.<sup>121</sup>

### **Evaluation/Assessments**

As noted above, 12-15 widows were recruited for the planning group. Therefore, I determined that the professionals were not needed to determine criteria's for the planning group. The planning group should consist of widows only. In essence, when individuals have something in common it is believed they are supportive of one another, as in all self-help groups.

The professionals were evaluated at the end of their presentations. At the close of the Widows' Ministry Seminar I distributed ten evaluation forms (see Appendix C) one returned incomplete evaluating Milda Bailey performance. Regarding the nine completed evaluation forms participants rated the facilitator "excellent" and 1 rated her performance as "above average." In all of the responses on the evaluation forms Milda Bailey received favorable (x) marks in all areas.

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<sup>121</sup> See WISER: Women's Institute For A Secure Retirement for information on: "Widowhood: Why Women Need To Talk About This Issue," <http://www.wiserwomen.org/index.php?id=274#>; "Widow's Checklist," <http://www.wiserwomen.org/index.php?id=278#>; "Widows And Widowhood," <http://www.wiserwomen.org/index.php?id=277#>; (accessed January 18, 2016). The website contains much further useful information.

At the close of the Widows' Retreat, I distributed five evaluation forms (see Appendix D) evaluating Rev. Marcia Smith-White's performance. Regarding the five completed evaluations she was rated "excellent" by all the attendees. In all of the contents on the evaluation form Rev. Smith-White received favorable (x) marks in all areas. The professionals volunteered their time and expertise. I also rated their contribution as successful in attaining the professional/volunteers for establishing criteria's for the planning group.

### **Goal 3 – Conduct an Introduction Widow Seminar/Workshop to the Planning Group**

(1) Conducting individual interviews with widows for the planning group. (2) I organized one Seminar on "What is Grief?" led by Milda Bailey. (3) I organized one Widows' Ministry Retreat for the widows in place of the reading resource (*Beyond the Broken Heart: A Journey Through Grief*, by Julie Yarbrough [2012]). I felt that this retreat would help the widows to debrief and process all of what we had been shared since the start of the project.

During the project there were several interviews and one is noted in this report in chapter one. Throughout this report are comments that reflect the journey of widowhood for the 12-15 women in the planning groups at various stages of implementing this project. The comments are reflective of determining the need for a widow ministry in the Butler congregation.

The two members of my Site Team were given a copy of *Beyond the Broken Heart: A Journey through Grief*, by Julie Yarbrough (2012). (See Appendix E.) Like most, if not all resources for widows, it is written by a woman sharing her loss. Julie Yarbrough wrote this book out of the perceived notion that the minister at her church

implied that she was (or should be) over her loss. In the book she was able to write down her journey of brokenness.

I prepared and distributed a flyer announcing the Widows' Ministry Seminar on March 28, 2015 (see Appendix F). As noted above Milda Bailey facilitated the Widow's Ministry Seminar, which eleven widows attended. The theme of the seminar was, 'What is Grief?' The goals were to: share and care among attendees, build a strong fellowship group, make new friends in a caring, Christian atmosphere. The agenda for the seminar included: (1) an introduction of the project, "A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows." Every widow was given an opportunity to introduce themselves to one another. (2) There was a YouTube video titled, "Understanding Grief"<sup>122</sup> prepared by the Hospice Foundation of America to assist and engage the planning group's discussion. The video was prepared for persons, "have recently experienced the end of a caring relationship . . . This program help you understand what you may be feeling and why. It also offers some tips that may make grieving a little less painful."<sup>123</sup> I selected the video during my research on the internet. (3) The sharing of widows' journeys were done to further enhance the conversations on the needs of widows. I encouraged the sharing and caring among widows, the building of a strong fellowship group, making new friends in a caring Christian atmosphere, and plans for a formal widow's ministry that will meets regularly. (4) We discussed "Breaking the Myths of Widowhood" by Ellen Kamp and Dawn Nargi,

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<sup>122</sup> Hospice Foundation of America, "Understanding Grief," YouTube video, 24:45, posted January 14, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIwQn4nmzYY> (accessed 22 March 2015).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

Co-Founders of the W-Connection, a widow support group in New York City.<sup>124</sup> The data from the evaluation form reported that attendees rated the event as “excellent.”

I prepared and distributed a flyer announcing the Widows Ministry Retreat (see Appendix G) for June 27, 2015. Six out of the twelve widows registered for the retreat attended. As noted above the Widows’ Ministry Retreat was facilitated by Rev. Marcia White-Smith. It was held at the Regis Care Center, 3200 Baychester Ave Bronx, NY, from 10:a.m. until 2.p.m. I prepared an agenda and program (see Appendix G) for the retreat. The Theme for the retreat was “Widows: Heart to Heart Conversation.” The planning group was asked to contribute to the cost of renting the conference room at the facility. It was in two parts: Part I, “Widows’: Heart to Heart Conversation;” and Part II, “Widows’: Looking Beyond Ourselves.” Since we were all widows, we were encouraged by the facilitator to engage in conversation with another person. The widows were asked to respond to this question. “What five words would you use to characterize who you are?” The exercise involved placing one word that describes the individual on a single card. The widow had a choice of fifty adjectives to choose from. The cards were placed on a table and she select five words to describe her character. Everyone had an option of adding a word if it was not on the table; she will share with the group why she selected that particular adjective. They were also asked to select another woman they admired. The following is a list of the five chosen adjectives from the 6 participating widows:

Widow #1: Wise, Open, Well Meaning, Sympathetic and Happy.

Widow #2: Faithful person, Reliable, Honest and outspoken, Happy and Determined.

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<sup>124</sup> Ellen Kamp and Dawn Nargi, “Breaking the Myths of Widowhood,” <http://www.wconnection.org/pdf/toolkit/Breaking%20the%20Myths%20of%20Widowhood.pdf> (accessed January 19, 2016).

Widow #3: Altruistic, Effective, Fierce, Energetic, and Wise.

Widow #4: Energetic, Conscientious, Honest, Charitable and Spiritual

Widow #5: Annoyed, Confident, Benevolent, Hospitable, and Honest-Speech

Widow #6: Reliable, Caring, Friendly, Confident, and Happy

A block of fifteen minutes was included in the retreat program to complete the pamphlet and to decide on a formal name, which we all agreed on—"Heart to Heart Widows Ministry." We also spent time editing the pamphlet.

I distributed the following resources from the CareNotes One Caring Place Abbey Press St. Meinard, IN 47577: 1. "God Where Are You?" by Adrian Burke; 2. "Growing Through Life's Transitions" by Cynthia Geison; 3. "How Faith Helps Us Overcome Anxiety" by Silas Henderson; 4. "Feeling Alone After a Loved One Dies" by Lisa Irish; 5. "Finding God in the Everyday Tasks of Living" by Nancy T. Stout; 6. "Finding Peace in the Present Moment" by Jenny Cromie; 7. "Fostering Health Relationships Later in Life" by Joel Schorn; 8. "Living with a Problem You Can't Solve" by Dr. Wayne E. Oates; 9. "Losing Someone Close" by Dr. Robert DiGiulio; 10. "Praying as a Woman" by Sister Jean Visel; 11. "Praying During Times of Anxiety and Worry" by Daniel Grippo; 12. "Responding Positively to a Difficult Diagnosis" by Mary Lynne Knighten; 13. "Seeking God as a Spiritual Pilgrim" by Murray Bodo; and 14. "The Healing Power of Human Touch" by Joel Schorn.

### **Evaluation/Assessment**

A number of widows were interviewed for this project as noted in the writing of this report. Throughout this report widows have shared their comments freely and where appropriate I use them to illustrate my point. Although the comments are unique to each widow, they are similar in that all widows do have something in common, which is the

desire to move forward with their lives. Their comments further gave voice to the needs of widows that they may gain self-worth and value. The comments in this report do reflect the 12-15 widows, who participated throughout the implementation of this project and not those who chose to remain invisible in Butler congregation.

The retreat was an additional strategy for this goal. Even though only six out of twelve registered widows attended the retreat, it accomplished its purpose by providing spiritual care to the needs of widows in the planning group. The Widow's Ministry Retreat was a very personal time for spiritual reflection and renewal. It was also a time for debriefing and processing the information gained during this project.

The objectives for the seminar and the retreat were attained by widows while developing a supportive and caring community.

#### **Goal 4 – Develop a Pastoral Care Pamphlet to be used in the Congregation**

(1) Organizing widows for a planning group and I consolidated and organize previously-researched on-line and library resources for a pamphlet. (2) In consultation with widows in the planning group, I prepared and mailed the resource with a questionnaire and a letter to ten pastors of congregations in the Metropolitan District of the United Methodist Church (MDUMC). (3) On behalf of the widows in the planning group, I started the process of seeking copyright and publishing rights for the resource prepared by myself and the planning group.

On June 27, 2015, during the workshop the planning group and I began discussing and planning the details for the pamphlet. I prepared and distributed a work sheet (see Appendix H) to develop the pamphlet. We used the worksheet as a guide to come up with ideas. I provided the planning group and site team with an outline for a ten page pamphlet. We did not complete the pamphlet. I noted all of the suggestions for the

pamphlet and we all agreed that it would be completed at the retreat. We used time during the workshop to decide on a formal name for the widow's ministry. As noted previously the pamphlet was completed during the retreat. The final copy of the pamphlet was completed at the retreat.

Later I distributed the completed pamphlets among the planning group for approval; everyone was pleased with the resource. I mailed copies of the pamphlet and a questionnaire and evaluation form with a cover letter (see Appendix I) to ten pastors in the MDUMC, three were returned completed. For the purpose of this report in the comment section of the evaluation forms (see Appendix I) two of the pastors made comments I will share. The comments were:

Pastor # 1 said, "On a short term basis we conducted a support group for bereavement. Over the past seven years there are 3 persons who lost their spouses through death. There are only 8 church related deaths in the past 7 years."

Pastor # 2 said, "I read the booklet and found many good insights and biblical perspectives. I will definitely use some of those in our new future. Also, I come to think that there are many widows in our neighboring communities and the widows are necessary for all churches. Thank you."

Regarding the ten distributed evaluations three were returned. I have concluded the three returned shows there are no widow ministries in any of the churches that received the resources based on the comments on the evaluation forms. It clearly shows that widows are being neglected in these congregations. For the two pastors this may have increased their awareness of widows in their congregations. The data received from the three returned evaluations are noted in Appendix I that describe the level of awareness and interests of the Pastors in the MDUMC.

The pamphlet, “Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry,” (Appendix H) serves dual functions. First, it informs the congregation and larger community that there is a ministry for widows. Secondly, it provides information on the need for a widow’s ministry that may help other widows find a place for healing and security from a biblical, spiritual, emotional and social perspective. The proper use of this resource will enhance the ministry of widows and the congregations’ outreach efforts. The pamphlet has several sections: *Introduction* is about the personal experience of one widow and her desire to affect the lives of other widows. *Supportive Care* addresses the early experience when support is vital in making an adjustment to widowhood. “The Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry” is about building a community of supportive care. Most people are not prepared to let the widow know that what she is experiencing is part of the journey when loss occurs in life. Loss affects people in different ways and addresses the emotional stages of the struggle to gain control over the grieving. These stages are very important for the widow to understand and for those around her as well. The Church involvement is necessary in that it maintains an ongoing relationship with the widow that addresses the isolation and neglect that may occur. Planned events will be activities the group will provide are outreach, education, networking and other services. Widows check lists are suggested “things to do” that widows may need to do following the loss and the burial. It is not intended as a complete list of things to do. Personal notes are necessary, especially during the first six months when you may not recall what you may have done or not done.

*Purpose* helps to focus us on our personal faith systems as a child of God. *Mission* is to bring together women with similar experiences and to share them for the



enhancement of the group. *Vision* is to touch the life of another widow so that they have a sense of belonging.

The copyright and publishing will extend beyond the submission of this report to the NYTS, Director of Doctor of Ministry degree program. I have mailed a copy of this resource via certified mail to Rev. Carrie Smallwood 1260 Adele Ave Bronx, NY 10469.

The start date for the Heart to Heart Widows' Ministry in the congregation was January 12, 2016. An evaluation of the ministry will be done in March 2016 on its progress. The following are sample questions:

1. Are you aware of the Heart to Heart Widows' Ministry in the congregation?
2. Would you like to know more about the widows' ministry?
3. What is the newest ministry in the congregation?

**Goal 5 – Present the Widow's Ministry (Heart To Heart Widows' Ministry) to the Church Council**

(1) I planned a Fellowship Dinner (closing event) for members of the site team, pastor, and the widows of the planning group. (2) I assisted the planning group in determining a formal name for the widow's ministry in Butler Church. (3) I made a written presentation to the Butler Church Council on the completion of the *Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows* demonstration project.

On September 12, 2015, eight widows out of the fifteen member planning group attended a Fellowship Dinner (closing event). I invited the Site Team Members and Pastor. We all brought a prepared cooked dish of our choosing. I announced the project was completed and I was in the writing phase of my project. I was asked by one of the widows, "What happens now?" As we ended the dinner, we agreed that I will approach

the pastor and make a final report to the Church Council for the “Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry” at Butler Church. The group will meet the second Thursday of the month from 5PM until 7PM.

I expressed my thanks and appreciation to everyone who attended the various events of the project. I received the permission of the widows to make our appeal to the pastor and leaders of the congregation to have the Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry. We closed the fellowship with a prayer for all of the widows who participated in the project.

On November 12, 2015 the formal name for the Butler Church widows’ ministry is “Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry.”

On December 8, 2015 I made the following report to the Butler Church Council:

From: Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon

To: Pastor Allen Pinckney, Pastor

BMUMC Church Council

Date: 12-8-2015

Re: Proposal for the “Heart to Heart Widows Ministry”

Several months ago, I came before this Church Council and requested authorization to conduct a project titled, “A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows,” as part of obtaining a Doctor of Ministry degree. Today, I am reporting that the project is at a stage in which, I can propose that the Church endorse the *Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry*.

This ministry was born out of the project and the participation of 12-15 widows, who participated in the project over the past several months. Their participation during the various events was both insightful and encouraging concerning the needs of widows. During our last event on December 12, during a Fellowship Dinner, we agreed that a widows’ ministry be a part of the ministry at BMUMC.

As an organizer, and planner I brought to the Pastor’s attention the project’s near completion and the desires of the women. After a brief discussion it was decided that the Widows’ Ministry would come under the umbrella of the Church and Society Committee as an outreach ministry of this congregation. The objective is to connect the church and society by outreach and supporting other widows in the surrounding community.

Subsequent to our discussion the Chairperson of Church and Society, Mrs. Sylvia Miller and members of that committee was made aware of this proposal.

The following is being proposed at BMUMC effective January 2016:

Ministry Name: “Heart to Heart Widows’ Ministry”

The Purpose:

- A ministry to outreach to women who have lost husbands and significant others to death.
- A ministry to outreach to widows of all ages regardless of beliefs.

The Mission:

- A support group that provides outreach and encouragement to all widows especially new widows.
- To meet the spiritual needs of women who have lost their husbands or significant others to death.
- To find purpose and meaning in life as a widow.
- A nondenominational ministry emphasis.

Meeting Place, Day and Time:

- Meetings will be either open to widows only or at times open to non-widows.
- Butler UM Church on the second Thursday of every month from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m.

Planned events are the responsibility of the group with prior consultation with the Church Council for any dates outside of the date being proposed above. The Church and Society Committee will be notified of all events to assist with announcements and publications to the congregation and wider community.

At the present time, I will act as the Coordinator for this ministry. Rev. Estella Abel, Deacon and Mrs. Mary Morton, member of the group will assist with providing information to the Church. It is our intention that a representative other than me will accept the task as the coordinator in the future.

My thanks to everyone for supporting the project and my ministry.

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon

### **Evaluation/Assessment**

The widows and I gathered for a Fellowship Dinner, this was a significant turning point in the project. I wanted to hear from the widows what the experience was like. The

more verbal persons commented, “It was a good experience.” “I learned a lot.” “We need to continue.” I felt, each of us had gained something from the experience together. There was a sisterhood that had developed during the implementation of this project.

We were all excited about continuing the widow’s ministry. I felt that the experiences of the project has completely resonated in them, we all expressed there was a need among the widows in the planning group as they experienced spiritual renewal and a desire to move head.

## CHAPTER 6

### MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

During my second year in the Doctor of Ministry program at NYTS, I along with others who were enrolled sat in a seminar to learn how to develop our demonstration project. We were told to select a Site Team consisting of “individuals who would (1) assist in my ministerial work, (2) provide an assessment of my level of competencies to do ministry and determine three areas for particular growth while doing the demonstration project, (3) they will assist me in determining and formalizing those competencies, (4) they will monitor my progress as well as approve the completion of the project by December 2015.”<sup>125</sup> I determined that the minimum requirement in my selection process was these persons had to be widows sensitive to the plight of other widows; and they were willing to share their own stories in the demonstration project. Their contributions will insure the completion of the project. In addition, I felt it was important that those on my team were familiar with my ministry focus in the United Methodist denomination as a deacon.

After the demonstration project proposal was approved by my advisor and the director for the Doctor of Ministry degree program I started the process of looking for members for my Site Team. Initially, I had a three-member site team: (1) Mrs. Mary Morton, a retired Assistant High School principal. Her specialization is in the areas of

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<sup>125</sup> Nancy B. Fields, “Reaching People/Changing Lives,” 86.

business and accounting. She has many years of civic service in the community as an officer in the National Association Advancement Colored People (NAACP), chairing the Education Committee, and was elected as the first Black Dean of the former Jay Monroe High School in New York City. She is an active member of BMUMC as a former Lay Leader and Speaker, member of the Education Committee and the Church Council, among her other church responsibilities. (2) Reverend Estella Voner-Abel has been serving as deacon at BMUMC, Bronx, NY. She has been active on the conference and district level of the Churches committees; for the latter, she chaired the District Council of Ministries. She served as the Director for the Lay Servant School Ministry. She has successfully written grants for Butler's after-school program and for its other youth outreach programs. (3) Reverend Dorethea Cretia is an ordained deacon in the UMC. She serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry for the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She is a practicing Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. However, Rev. Cretia has since removed herself from the project; it is unclear why she did not continue, even though I had made several attempts to get a reason. Months later, I was able to have a face to face conversation with her, when she shared with me that she had started a widow's ministry of her own.

In March 2015 I had a meeting with the members of my site team; they were enthusiastic and ready to work with me to implement the project. I followed the plan of implementation that was outlined in chapter six of the demonstration project: (1) I asked, the remaining Site Team members to be present for all of the events when possible, and that I will be planning over the next several months (March through September 2015). (2) I informed the Site Team that, during the project, we will have face to face meetings and

conference calls to evaluate the progress of the project. (3) I informed the Site Team of my intention to present my demonstration project proposal to the Pastor and Butler Church Council on March 10, 2015 for approval and to begin the implementation of the project. In addition, I shared my challenge statement with the members of my Site Team which states:

As a widow after a period of mourning, I experienced a sense of abandonment by my congregation. In my role as an Ordained Deacon, licensed Social Worker and a widow, I have a passion to become an advocate for widows. It is my vision that the UMC establishes a pastoral care ministry that returns to the biblical mandate of providing care to widows. This demonstration project will identify widows at BMUMC in the Bronx, New York, where I will be an advocate for widows to enhance their quality of life through Bible study, retreat, workshop, literature, and a preaching moment.

Following my meeting with my Site team, I discussed my project proposal with the Pastor. He was pleased to hear that I was enriching my professional and spiritual growth and voiced his support. He added that he hoped at the conclusion there will be a widows ministry and a formal name for the group. We ended our conversation with him giving me directions on the next step in getting the approval of the Butler Church Council and congregation. Several phone calls were conducted to the appropriate individuals.

In March 2015, the project was implemented. I had 12-15 interested widows for the planning group and two Site Team members. I was nervous and they were excited to start. Through the announcements and by word of mouth the project began to take on life in the congregation. The competencies I agreed on with my Site Team during the writing of the proposal of the demonstration project were: Professional Skills, Spiritual Leader (Self-Care), and Prophetic Agent to be worked on during the demonstration project—“A Pastoral Care Model of Caring For Widows.”

**Professional Skills:**

During the demonstration project, I have developed habits (proofreading and editing) as a sense of awareness in writing and communicating my ideas. I attended several sessions at the NYTS writing center, where Audrey Raden assisted me with my writing skills. According to her it was not as bad as I was led to believe. Yet, I recognize, I needed help. Her assistance has enhanced my writing skills and the development of this report. This competency remains a work in progress.

**Spiritual Leader (Self-Care):**

I worked with Rev. Dr. Gordon Edwards, Therapist, and Mentor on an as-needed basis over the past eight years into this project. He has been my mentor from the beginning of my call to ordained ministry. He has been a valuable source that I can call on for information and spiritual strength. I attended the Bishop's Day on the District 2015 (see Appendix J) for clergy in the MDUMC. The theme for the event was "Caring for Your Whole Being," I along with others were challenged in the following areas of our ministry: 1. Spiritual, 2. Professional 3. Physical, 4. Intellectual, and 5. Emotional. For each of these we were expected to answer the following questions: 1. What are your current practices? And 2. What are your goals for the next year?

It is always refreshing to hear from our spiritual leaders as we do ministry among the people. It was also a time to hear from colleagues how they are experiencing ministry in their settings.

I attended the "Healthy Living in the Midst of Moral Dissonance," (see Appendix K). This conference was encouraging in that it helped me to focus on inner spiritual disciplines as a moral agent in difficult circumstances. As a spiritual caregiver I make decisions for myself that are often in conflict with culture and society. During the event



we were challenged to respond to our moral beliefs and values. It was interesting to hear my colleagues as they too had similar experiences in their ministry settings that were stressful as well. In addition to the conference I was delighted by the rich Methodist Heritage on St. Simon Island, Georgia where John Wesley had visited when he came to America in the 1700s.

I further enhanced my self-care, by reading *Beatitudes: Living with Blessings, Meditation, and Prayer* (1997) by Ronald Lello (see Appendix L). This 30 day reading program has nurtured my relationship with God and humanity. It's an amazing book for the healing of a wounded spirit. I recommend it especially for those mourning and grieving a loss. The beatitude passages in both Matthew 5:1-12 and Luke 6: 20-27 have personal meaning as I have continued to develop my new identity—widow. The emotions I once had surfaced on the pages as if I were reading the details of my life. The reading was enjoyable because it gave voice to what I had experienced seven years ago. The memories are forever present, but not painful. The beatitudes although written in the context of Jesus' teaching ministry remain relevant for us today. I can only imagine Jesus was being confronted by all sorts of people with many issues—the poor, those mourning, the meek, those who were hungry and thirsty, those seeking mercy, those with issues of the heart, those who sought peace and for those who were being persecuted.

I was involved in a physical exercise and nutritional program to lose 25 pounds. I had a medical examination by my primary physician, who ordered a battery of stress tests which I complied with fully. I was grateful that all of my test results were positive and yielded no medical concerns. Needless to say my initial concern was my heart. I began counting calories daily and a daily physical exercise program. I have lost between 10 and

15 pounds of weight between April and November 2015. I am using my treadmill at least three times during the week for one hour. The results of this strategy have proven to be physically beneficial in that I have lost 10 pounds in six months.

**Prophetic Agent:**

I set forth in his project to act as an advocate for widows; and further, that the church became intentional and committed to a long-term outreach ministry of caring for widows by preaching, Bible Study, seminars, retreats and networking with other organizations like the UMW group. Unfortunately, it will not be so until widows themselves take the rein by making themselves visible to those who have the power and authority. However, women are strong and determined in their struggle for equality and justice as demonstrated in this project.

Throughout this demonstration project I have presented the voices of widows by identifying their isolation and neglect. The most powerful moment was during my preaching moment when a woman in the congregation came to me and said, “I now know what to do if I ever become a widow.” I not only brought awareness to the congregation that there is a biblical mandate to care for widows, but the Church ought to be a place in which widows seek protection, security, socialization, financial support, and whatever else is needed. It was affirming that following the preaching, several widows were appreciative of the fact that I had identified personal concerns of theirs—for companionship and assistance from their faith community. A prophetic voice on behalf of widows such as clergy willingness to speak out against inequality and injustice is our biblical mandate as servants of Jesus Christ.

During the writing of this report I have cited several scholars Cherie Blair, J. K. Trivedi, Paul Sevak, David Weir and Richard H. Gentzler. They have studied and

researched the conditions that adversely affect the plight of widows in this country as well as in several underdeveloped countries. The reports remains appalling to say the least that widows in this country are viewed as marginal—living in poverty. In view of the reports the church is lagging in its responsibility. As much as I have presented a picture in this report I can only end by saying this was an encouraging beginning for me to do more.

I had two supportive Site Team members working alongside me during this project offering their suggestions and insights. They both have enhanced my spiritual and professional growth. They challenged me to reflect theologically and theoretically about what it means to do pastoral care. I recall Dr. Humberto Alfaro saying, “You are becoming doctors of the church and you have to talk like you know what you are talking about.” In those words were wisdom and knowledge as I have spoken in to the lives of individuals throughout this project. Furthermore, Mrs. Morton always questioned my decisions and expected clarity in my decisions. For example, when I suggested that the widows’ ministry be connected to the Church and Society, she wanted to know “why?” Rev. Abel offered many suggestions throughout as an alternative to whatever I had decided to do. Her approach has helped me to reflect on my pragmatic approach in accomplishing all of the tasks in this project. Meaning, I feel that I am more flexible in my planning, which allowed me to enjoy my accomplishments.

**Site Team Assessments and Evaluation:****Mary Morton submitted the following on my performance during the project:**

When Rev. Carrie Smallwood approached me to be a Site Team partner I was delighted because in my previous contacts with Rev. Smallwood I have found her to be all about the business at hand. She does not procrastinate nor does she promise anything without delivering. In the initial Bible Study of the Book of Ruth, Rev. Smallwood presented the material in a remarkable manner. Her insight brought out facts we had not been aware of. The class was conducted in a professional and interesting manner; the class started on time and ended on time; the participants were “well-fed” at the conclusion of the study. Rev. Smallwood’s professional skills are uncontested. In all areas she has been organized, her presentations were biblically connected, and the material was presented in a clear and interesting manner.

This was the initial presentation before a pre-planned seminar which was held on Saturday, March 28, 2015. This well-planned presentation was graciously received by all participants. In her personal experience, Rev. Smallwood uses faith in God, her background experiences, and her professional work to seek social change in matters affecting all people and particularly the ‘silent minority.’ She has worked tirelessly in her church, the political arena and her neighborhood to improve conditions for the forgotten.

Self-care. Rev. Smallwood has demonstrated that she is willing to attend to her self-care. She has been attending retreats and she continues to mold her spiritual growth through reading programs, Bible Study, preaching, and self-introspection.

Rev. Smallwood has been and is attending to her personal care by engaging in programs to enhance her well-being in mind, body, and spirit. In this effort she has been

clear and dedicated. I am confident she will continue to work in this area as she has done in the past.<sup>126</sup>

**Rev Estella Voner Abel submitted the following on my performance during the project:**

Rev. Smallwood objectives for the Widows' Ministry were:

1. Organized x, Disorganized \_.
2. Clear x, Unclear \_.
3. Interesting x, Uninteresting \_.
4. Professionally presented x, Unprofessional presented \_\_.
5. Sensitive to widows' needs x, Insensitive to widows' needs \_\_.
6. Information related to my needs x, Information unrelated to my needs \_\_.
7. Biblical connection x, Un-Biblical connection \_\_.
8. Additional Comments: Rev. Smallwood was organized and very clear about her objectives for the Widows' Ministry. The justification for the ministry was most compelling and gave her presentations and explanations a foundation that was appealing even to those who were not widows. Her biblical foundation and the Bible study she conducted was perhaps the strongest aspect of her approach to this ministry. Her Bible study attracted many women who were interested in bible study and in particular the story of Ruth and Naomi. During the study Rev. Smallwood not only presented the story in the context of biblical times but

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<sup>126</sup> Mary Morton, Site Team Member, "Evaluation Widow's Ministry," emailed December 23, 2015.

skillfully intertwined the emotions, consequences and similarities to situations in present day life. Throughout the Bible study the study group was frequently reminded of the personal needs of modern day widows and their individual needs and responsibilities to each other as widows and as Christian women. In her final presentation to the Council meeting of Butler Memorial UMC, the members of the Council were supportive of this ministry and were hopeful that she would lead the initial thrust of the ministry at Butler Memorial UMC. Rev. Smallwood completed her projected as stated in her objectives. It is my hope and prayer that her Widow's Ministry is a success not only at Butler but in the New York Annual Conference [of the United Methodist Church].<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Rev. Estella Abel, Site Team Member, "Final Evaluation," emailed January 12, 2016.

## EPILOGUE

“The cry of the widow is a genuine cry indeed. Like the downtrodden, the marginalized, the oppressed, the social outcast and other disadvantaged people; the widow is never left out of the synergic effects of societal intimidation. By simply losing her beloved husband to our arch-enemy death, she has been branded a social outcast.”<sup>128</sup> You cannot begin to imagine the pain and hurt from this experience. Life for many has never been the same since that awesome day when she had to say farewell. Then there are those who have been able to overcome the intensity of their struggles to recovery. Like Julie Yarbrough reminded her readers that recovery does not mean forgetting, it simply provides a balance in which to manage a new identity.

Grieving is a lifelong experience, you may erase the immediacy of memories but they have a way of showing up unannounced and unexpected. It is for these reasons why connecting to a support system is helpful, be it your faith community or a social group that shares your concerns and needs. Those offering their service may have professional training or not; regardless they need to have a compassionate and caring heart for widows. In this project it was the faith community where widows were seeking that safe haven to feel protected and safe to share. I believe God is seeking advocates to care for

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<sup>128</sup> Sowu, *Challenges of African Widowhood*, 73.

widows and it must begin in the house of God, by the people, who have a call for compassion, equality, justice and mercy for those without voice.

When we look at the present-day church, it is not lacking in resources. It does appear that it needs to have an awareness, knowledge and understanding of its purpose, mission and vision as people of God in caring for the most vulnerable—the widow. If the Church desires to be the reigning kingdom of God where people come and are made whole from their pain and hurt, as those widows in this project had expressed, then caring for the widow is one way of fulfilling the mandate of its Christian responsibility. Therefore, a pastoral care model of caring for widow's is needed to address needs identified by widows in meaningful conversations.

A pastoral care model of caring for widows mobilizes pastors, church leaders and widows to become engaged when a death occurs and understand the processes of grieving that effect the life of widows. The struggles that she may have need not be seen as a negative experience that says, “Get over it” and “move on.” Pastoral care can empower the widow against those who may want to take advantage during moments of vulnerability. Authentic pastoral care can help widows in accepting their new identity so that they go forward in life in grace.

Ultimately during my research it appears that the task of caring for widows may very well be best done by those deeply affected—the widow herself. However, it does not exclude others from bearing some responsibility for seeing that there is a widow ministry that calls everyone to continue to provide, share, encourage, inspire, and to simply be a presence for widows in their time of need long after the spouse had died. It is much easier for a widow to ask for assistance when the congregation has let it be known that they are



here for her in a very caring manner. Oftentimes it is left up to the grieving widow to reach out for assistance, but if experience lends itself to an outreach ministry the providers of care need to be equipped for that ministry. It is my hope that the resource produced by this project be used to help churches to care for its widows in love. To God be the Glory!

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A  
Demonstration Project Proposal

## A PASTORAL CARE MODEL OF CARING FOR WIDOWS

By

CARRIE M. SMALLWOOD

### A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

2015

#### **Challenge Statement**

As a widow after a period of mourning, I experienced a sense of abandonment by my congregation. In my role as an Ordained Deacon, licensed Social Worker and a widow, I have a passion to become an advocate for widows. It is my vision that the United Methodist Church establishes a pastoral care ministry that returns to the biblical mandate of providing care to widows. This demonstration project will identify widows at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church in the Bronx, New York, where I will be an advocate for widows to enhance their quality of life through Bible study, retreat, workshop, literature, and a preaching moment.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Butler Memorial United Methodist Church (BMUMC) was the church where I began my practice in ministry. I joined the congregation in 1978, as a reaffirmation of faith based on my former Christian experience as a Methodist growing up in South Carolina. I experienced a warm and inviting presence among the people and immediately began to serve on various committees and groups—the Usher Board, women’s organization, gospel choir, teacher in the Church School, and Chair of the Council on Ministries, President of the Board of Trustees, Chair of the Building Fund Program and President of the United Methodist Women’s organization and other auxiliaries. My decision restored my faith in Jesus Christ in an amazing way—to be a Deacon in the United Methodist Church (UMC) and a Board Certified Chaplain as a pastoral care provider to affirm God’s call in the practice of ministry. It is my desire to give back to my community as an advocate for widows.

During my time at Butler, I had the most difficult experience in my life—the death of my husband. His funeral service was at the Butler Church, the members were present and supportive of my plight. In the days and weeks to follow, I mourned my loss and I became a grieving widow. As I processed my emotions, I felt alone in a community of believers that was not equipped to embrace loss, mourning and grieving. I share because I do not believe my experience was an isolated event; I believe there are other

widows with similar stories. However, it is evidenced that God calls those who God chooses for the healing of God's people. This project proposal addresses an event that is much larger than my individual experience; I believe God is seeking advocates to care for widows.

BMUMC is a church where you can experience the call to pastoral leadership for the larger faith community. I am one of five clergypersons, called out by this faith community in its 102 years of ministry. Among widows, I believe, it is a biblical mandate for all persons in leadership roles to carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ in a broken community.

BMUMC compliments its inherited tradition passed down through many centuries of leaders and followers. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, cared for all of God's people regardless of their social status. He preached and practiced God's grace of caring during his ministry to the sick, the prisoners, the weak and lame, the widows and children, the poorest in society. Wesley's life of grace was evident in the way he cared for self and neighbor. He truly believed his actions were God's love for humanity through him.

BMUMC has a heritage that is rooted in a deep and profound understanding of God's grace. Its tradition of Methodism is an evangelical witness to God's gift of caring for all of God's people. "Methodists believe this incredible grace [caring] flows from God's great love for us."<sup>1</sup> In a practical way Methodists define grace as the love and mercy God gives us because God wants us to have it, not because of anything we have

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<sup>1</sup> The United Methodist Church, United Methodist Handbook, "Let's Go Fishing: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World," United Methodist Communications, #421713/1213, [infoserv@umcom.org](mailto:infoserv@umcom.org), 1.

done to earn it. The people of Butler Church share this fundamental doctrine of grace as Methodists. Clergy and laity, alike stress this concept of caring in their spiritual practices—studying the Scriptures, prayer, in fellowship with other Christians, by deepening our knowledge of God, and partaking of the Communion. By keeping these spiritual disciplines, we are on a continuous journey for Christian perfection.

Butler Church shares in the common characteristics of the Christian faith. Like most mainline Protestant denominations, it follows Jesus' teaching in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19a, where he told his followers, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations." This is BMUMC's primary mission in the community "to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Butler's profile is part of a connectional system of United Methodist Churches. It achieves its mission through people, who are equipped, empowered and spirit-led in the local congregations and communities around the globe. A description of any local congregation is a description of the entire denomination. We like to say, "When one local church suffers the entire denomination feels the hurt." When we say its ministry presences are global in nature, we mean it is reaching the most unexpected areas of human habitation. When it comes to the United Methodist organizational structure—General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference, Annual Conference, District Conference, and local congregation—its hierarchy has an upward and downward decision-making process that is democratic. The delegates are people chosen by the local church to represent the body's spiritual, religious, and social needs. The local congregation is where the heart of ministry begins and continues when it extends God's Kingdom of care. In addition to the conferences in the United States, there are conferences in other parts of



the world (Africa, Europe, and Asia) that connect the Methodist denomination in ministry.

In addition to the above larger profile of the denomination, Butler practices its caring ministry through: 1) an inviting and inspiring worship; 2) as engaged disciples for mission and outreach; 3) a gifted partnership between clergy and laity; 4) an effective, educated, and inspired clergy; and 5) small group ministries for all age-levels. Through these caring ministry people are encouraged, supported, and held accountable in their stewardship and Christian life. While some congregations are more vital than others, these aspects are evident in plans of action to see that lives are transformed. We Methodists are proud to invite others by using this slogan, “Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors.”<sup>2</sup> Our polity and doctrines are outlined in the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, which shapes us as people of faith. At Butler Church, this slogan is experienced through the ministry of giving. The monetary gifts from its members spread the globe. The UMC is a generous organization—in its financial giving from the Apportionments (monies) by the local congregations to the various boards, agencies, and ministries of the church. For example, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and The Advance are the mission-giving channels that work to provide medical supplies, food and water, clothing and the rebuilding of shelter in devastated areas around the world. There are unique signs of God’s caring ministry in every local church’s profile. BMUMC was established through “the efforts of a small group of civic-minded people with a missionary zeal to have a Methodist Church in the Williamsbridge

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

section of the Bronx . . . Butler started as a Mission Center and remained so until 1930.”<sup>3</sup> During that era people of color did not feel welcomed in the white Methodist churches. Hence, a dedicated woman named Belle Johnson advanced a loan of \$500 to purchase the property for the first building of the Butler Methodist Church. Butler was erected as a place of worship by those early pioneers—many of whom were women.

Butler had several pastors during its history. Two of them had the most lasting effect in its ministry—Rev. William Preston Johnson, who served thirty-two years; and Rev. Granville Forde, who served twenty-four years. Their length of service is unique to the Methodist itinerate system, which says pastors are appointed one year at a time to any local congregation. Many believe their tenure contributed to the success and growth of this congregation. It has had several pastors in recent years; many believe this has had a negative impact on the congregation maintaining its stability in the neighborhood.

In spite of the changing demographics of the neighborhood, Butler Church remains a striving spiritual center in the Northeast section of the Bronx, New York. The preaching and worship services continue to touch the lives of people. There are two United Methodist congregations in close proximity to Butler, with similar ethnic demographics. In nearby Co-Op City and Eastchester there is a Spanish-speaking Methodist congregation. In the near future, there will be a Ghanaian United Methodist Church in this area of the Bronx. The community is culturally diverse but more is needed to bring ethnic groups together under one roof for worship.

Butler has been the fastest growing congregation of its sister congregations. The current recorded membership is 1034. The average Sunday attendance is approximately

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<sup>3</sup> Butler Memorial United Methodist Church and Mary Morton, “Butler Historical Moments,” History Committee Notes, 4.

356 between two services (8a.m. and 11a.m.). Butler is primarily an African-American and Caribbean American congregation—folks who have origins in the South, several Caribbean Islands, and Africa. However, its current membership is mostly native New Yorkers, born in the 1960s and 70s during the baby boomer generation. They are older adults, working class and professional, who are about to retire. Many of this older population are females, and a significant number are widows (this project will identify this population).

As in many mainline Protestant congregations women visibly outnumber the men; this is also true of Butler's congregation. There are a significant number of older adults between the ages of 55 and 65. It is a challenge for the congregation to involve those between 30 and 45 in the ministry. In conversations the young adults wanted a contemporary style of worship service that is free of liturgies and hymns making it more appealing. The response was to have praise and worship in the service by young adult music groups and praise dancing.

However, the style of worship is a blend of traditional and contemporary. As Methodists, we are known for singing hymns, communal prayers of confession, reciting creeds and affirmations, and responsive reading. The worship is sacramental in that the Lord's Supper and Baptism are considered as the true marks of Christian discipleship. There are many programs and opportunities for ministry—evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men groups, and the existence of many small group (auxiliaries) ministries for all age levels—consisting of choirs, and ushers—and two midweek Bible Study groups that meet in the

day and evening. There is the nontraditional ministry for youth, such as a boys' basketball team.

The spiritual life of BMUMC is grounded in the principals of "social holiness." Meaning, to love God is to love your neighbor—the widow and the orphan, the prisoner, the aged and the most vulnerable in society. By practicing these spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible Study, Holy Conferencing, Communion, and obeying the ordinances of God) it sustains our connection to God that inspires us to do ministry. United Methodists are always on a continuous journey of spiritual growth for perfection. These practices have shaped our theology of social holiness that God is for all people regardless of marital status, sexuality, race, class, gender, age, education, income, social status, and certainly the widow. Along this same line, to care for the widow is a mandate of one's Christian faith performed through works of "piety" and works of "mercy," which are the essences of God's love in action.

This congregation is currently involved in its building expansion program—adding a community and education wing to the existing facility. In 1985, the members recognized the need for additional space. There was a huge growth in our Church School attendance and the need for other outreach programs; and after much discussion a decade later the project started. The three-phase project started in 1995, and it is now in its final phase toward completion. The building expansion program will incur a mortgage on the congregation. Some of the programs envisioned for the new space are early childhood services, family counseling services, computer-training space, and employment referral services. This of course will further enhance the ministry of Butler's congregation. At every step of the project a woman chaired the planning of the expansion program.

In light of the religious perils in society, Butler continues to be a beacon of hope. It continues to be actively involved in attracting seekers who are looking for a place to worship. As the church grows and peoples' lives change, the church must continue its path of faithfulness by reaching out to those who are of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds—the new immigrants. Surely, there are widows among this group?

In the pews, women are experiencing the subtle abandonment of God's caring grace. This is the church's finest moment, to reach out to widows as the Bible mandates in Acts 6: 1-6 (NSRV),<sup>4</sup> it tells us that the Hellenists complained of the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The concept of neglect encompasses many areas of a person's life—financial, social, spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and others. If the Church desires to be a safe sanctuary where people come and are made whole from their pain and hurt, then caring for the widow is one way of fulfilling the mandate of our Christian responsibility.

As noted earlier, among the many ministries of Butler Church, there is an organized group of United Methodist Women whose purpose is to do missions with women and children. At Butler Church a community of United Methodist Women (UMW) exists whose "purpose is to know God and experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship and to expand the concepts of Mission through participation in the global ministries of the Church."<sup>5</sup> Women in the congregation have played leading roles in chairing and organizing the

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations will be from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>5</sup> United Methodist Women, *United Methodist Women Handbook 2013-2016* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2013), [https://s3.amazonaws.com/umw/pdfs/Handbook2013\\_2016\\_English\\_D38\\_1213.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/umw/pdfs/Handbook2013_2016_English_D38_1213.pdf) (accessed January 24, 2015), 5.

ministries of the church where lives are transformed. Even those women who are not formal members of this organization contributed to the successes of the overall caring ministry of Butler Church since its early beginning.

Butler women gave their resources—time, prayers, talents, skills, witnessing, preaching and testifying—so that the church could grow and be the place God intended for all people. They have faithfully served in various capacities—Sunday School, teachers, Deaconesses, Evangelist, chair of Women’s Day Committees, Finances Boards, and much more. It has been long recognized by the General Conference of the denomination that women are as equally qualified to lead the church as ordained clergy. It ordained Rev. Anna Howard Shaw “in October 1880, her name [was] presented for ordination at the New York Annual Conference in Tarrytown, New York.”<sup>6</sup> Ordination was a past struggle for all women in the church. Spiritually, we are now facing the subtle neglect of those who are dealing with personal loss and are now widows. Therefore, it is not only the responsibility of the Church’s leadership, but also that of women to care for each other as they experience the pain and suffering as widows. However, it is incumbent on the Church to respond to its biblical mandate of caring for their widows.

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<sup>6</sup> Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodist 1760-1939* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 194.

## CHAPTER 2 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

### Challenge Statement

As a widow after a period of mourning, I experienced a sense of abandonment by my congregation. In my role as an Ordained Deacon, licensed Social Worker and a widow, I have a passion to become an advocate for widows. It is my vision that the United Methodist Church establishes a pastoral care ministry that returns to the biblical mandate of providing care to widows. This demonstration project will identify widows at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church in the Bronx, New York, where I will be an advocate for widows to enhance their quality of life through Bible study, retreat, workshop, literature, and a preaching moment.

This demonstration project focuses on widows in the Butler Memorial United Methodist Church (BMUMC) congregation who are experiencing abandonment during a most difficult time in their lives—the death of a loved one [husband] or a partner. Life after the death of a loved one, as we know, is an emotion all humans will experience—grief. Grief as we know it is a never-ending process. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:2 there is “a time to be born and a time to die;” again in Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed for “mortals to die once and after the judgment.” These Scriptures speaks to an experience that affects the life of those who must go through the mourning and grieving stages. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross writes about it in *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy, and Their Own Families*.<sup>7</sup> Widows experience an unusual “time of weeping . . . and a time of mourning . . .” (Ecclesiastes 3:4-5). Grief never ends, but there is hope that life will continue for widows in BMUMC as they reflect on

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<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death & Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy & Their Own Families* (New York: Scribner, 2014).

experiences they will share with others in a retreat. The hope is that widows in the focus group talk about loneliness, anger, hurt and disappointments while they discover their self-worth through a new identity.

The first challenge is whether Butler's widows will reach out and tell their stories in confidence, regardless of circumstances. This will help the congregation to more readily accept its widows by removing any stigma and embracing the widow during the early period of mourning and throughout the grieving. The leaders in the congregation will also admit that conversations about death are not easy for all those involved—the widow, laity and pastors—in this learning process. This reduces the negative dynamic often created—loneliness and abandonment by widows to isolate them from fellowshiping with the congregation. In the congregation that vulnerable space—emotions—are very sensitive. Nonetheless, the need exists that Butler Church provide the *Kairos*—moment of caring for widows.

The second challenge this project implies is that there are a significant number of widows in Butler church. Therefore, those widows at Butler need to make themselves visible to the pastor and leaders of the congregation. In the larger context of doing ministry at Butler Church, women have always demonstrated an active role in the caring ministry. But in doing ministry they have not addressed this personal need—grieving the loss of a loved one. While looking at this locally, Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., the Director of the Center on Aging and Older-Adult Ministries for the General Board of Discipleship of the UMC, reported these statistics, regarding marital status, that

More than half (55%) of older non-institutional adults lived with their spouse in 2000. Older men are much more likely to be married than older women: 73% of men, compared with 41% of women. Since women have a longer life expectancy than men (79.7% years at birth for women,



compared with 74.3 years for men) and men often marry younger women, nearly half (45%) of all older women are widows, with more than four times as many widows (8.5 million) as widowers (2 million). Only 28.8% of women 75 years or older lived with a spouse in 2000.<sup>8</sup>

Considering these statistics, this project will involve Butler's widows by identifying them in the congregation as they engage in meaningful conversations addressing ageism, sexism, and gender relationship and socialization.

Janet C. Kilbirde and others write, "Women now represent 77% of the elder people living alone; by 2020 this will increase to 85%."<sup>9</sup> These numbers present a challenge to Butler church and the neglect of widows. What could it be like if Butler Church began to reach out to its widows in the congregation? Butler Church, as a Christian congregation, is under a biblical mandate to care for the widow and for those in need. "In obedience to the Scriptures, the church must take up the mantle of service and ministry to meet the needs of widows regardless of age. Widows like other women are in danger of mistreatment or being taken advantage of by unscrupulous people."<sup>10</sup> While the above statistics presents a picture of the larger community and of the church, it is relevant to the widows and the BMUMC congregation to work towards a pastoral care ministry for widows by developing a resource for future use.

The third challenge is for Butler Church to prepare its laity and clergy for a widow's ministry. There is a need for awareness and education, that leaders discern the widow's plight. It is conceivable that everyone knows someone who has experienced the

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<sup>8</sup> Richard H. Gentzler, *The Graying of the Church, A Leader's Guide for Older-Adult Ministry in the UMC* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2002), 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> Janet C. Kilbride, Sharon Nagy and Robert L. Rubinstein, *Elder Living Alone* (NY: Aldine Gruyter, 1992), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Watson Sadler, "A Strategy for Ministry to Widows in the Local Church" (DMin project, Liberty University, 1997), 9.

emotions of grieving. Dr. Gary R. Collins states, “People grieve when they lose hope, a dream for the future, good health, a place of residence, or a pet. Similar principles of grieving can apply in all these situations, but by far the most are often encountered in grieving the loss of a loved one who has died.”<sup>11</sup> At Butler Church, we must not take it for granted that life for a widow is easy and life simply continues as usual. This project is a call on Butler Church to erase the misconceptions that widows will jump back into the normalcy of life in a few months after the funeral, the phone calls and visits have ceased.

At the conclusion of this project, it is my hope that widows at Butler Church are no longer overwhelmed by the challenges they experience after the death of a loved one. More importantly, this project must not reflect a personal experience, but that it motivates others to be an advocate with a strong voice for widows. Additionally, based on literature, widows will experience compassion and care in their new role. In reaching these conclusions, widows at Butler church will organize themselves as a supportive ministry on behalf of the community. The ministry will assist widows in those areas they are having challenges—spiritual, emotional, social and physical. They will get answers to questions like: Where will widows turn when monies evaporate? Whom will widows call upon for advice or assistance when needed? These are questions embedded in this project to the community of faith to empower its leaders with resource.

As a widow, I am convinced the church is who I must call upon in alleviating this kind of silent suffering. I will utilize the pastor and the widows as my primary subjects to facilitate the outcome in this project proposal. The latter will be a focus group of about 15 widows coming together that will have an opportunity to share their experiences. This

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<sup>11</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling Casebook*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 137.

demonstration project proposes *A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows* by developing a resource for pastors and congregations.

### CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

**Goal 1:** Increase the awareness of the biblical, social, and emotional practice for caring for widows among the pastor, widows and leaders of Butler Memorial United Methodist Church.

**Strategy 1:** Prepare and send a survey/questionnaire via mail to the pastor and leaders of Butler Church to identify, and measure the interest and awareness for the care of Butler's widows.

**Strategy 2:** Attend one United Methodist Women's meeting to bring about education and awareness and to identify those that are interested in being a part of the widows' focus group.

**Strategy 3:** Prepare one presentation utilizing available resources from the library and the internet to give to various groups in particular the UMW's group further soliciting involvement in the project.

**Strategy 4:** I will facilitate one Bible Study sessions on the Book of Ruth.

**Strategy 5:** I will present one preaching moment to the Butler Memorial congregation that will further bring about the biblical awareness of caring for widows.

**Evaluation:** Prepare and distribute the questionnaire to all of the participants. I will analyze the results of the returned questionnaires.

**Goal 2:** Recruit one professional and one volunteer (psychologist and social worker) for the task of organizing a widow's ministry in the congregation.

**Strategy 1:** I will utilize the professionals to develop criteria for the participation of 10 widows for the focus group.

**Strategy 2:** I will conduct one visit to Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, NY or another facility/agency in the community to further recruit two bereavement counselors.

**Evaluation:** Prepare and distribute an evaluation to the widows in the focus group to evaluate the professional and volunteer, and the recruitment process. I will analysis the data from the evaluations.

**Goal 3:** Provide one seminar on determining the needs of widows in the congregation.

**Strategy 1:** I will conduct individual interviews with widows for the focus group.

**Strategy 2:** I will ask members of the site team and the focus group to read *Beyond the Broken Heart: A Journey Through Grief*, by Julie Yarbrough (2012).

**Evaluation:** Prepare and distribute an evaluation to the participants; they will evaluate the facilitator, the interviewing process and the suggested reading resource's usefulness. I will analyze the data from the evaluation.

**Goal 4:** Have 10 widows in the focus group and I will publish a pastoral care pamphlet no more than 10 pages in length as a resource to be use by pastors in other congregations and mainly the congregation of Butler Memorial United Methodist Church.

**Strategy 1:** Widows in the focus group and I will consolidate and organize previously-researched on-line and library resources.

**Strategy 2:** Widows in the focus group and I will prepare and mail the resource with a questionnaire to 10 pastors of congregations in the Metropolitan District of the United Methodist Church.

**Strategy 3:** Widows in the focus group and I will seek copyright and publishing rights for the future use of this resource by others not connected to Butler congregation. The publishing and distributing of this resource will support the work, ministry, and mission of clergy in the United Methodist Church.

**Evaluation:** Prepare and distribute an evaluation to 15 leaders in the congregation, the pastor of Butler, the advisor, site team members and 10 pastors of other congregations, (who received the pamphlet by mail) to evaluate the pamphlet. I will analysis the data of the evaluation.

**Goal 5:** A widow's ministry will be formally announced to the congregation.

**Strategy 1:** I will assist the focus group in determining a formal name for the widow's ministry in Butler Church.

**Strategy 2:** I will make a written presentation to the Butler Church Council on the completion of the *Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows* demonstration project.

**Strategy 3:** I will plan a closing event for members of the site team, advisor, pastor, and the widows of the focus group and key leaders in the congregation to express my appreciation.

**Evaluation:** Prepare and distribute an evaluation eight weeks after the start of the widow's ministry to the pastor and 20 leaders in the congregation on the progress of the widow's ministry.

## CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### **Biblical/Theological**

1. The Book of Ruth depicts a story of three widowed women. *What does the Bible write concerning widows? What biblical themes, understandings have been neglected or misunderstood that contributes to the lack of care to widows?*

Scriptures mandates that Butler Church care for widows—in Acts 6:1-6, tell us that the “Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.” If the Church desires to be a place where people come, and are made whole from their pain and hurt then caring for the widow is one way of fulfilling the mandate of our Christian responsibility. Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason) how can the Butler congregation reflect theologically on caring for widows?

2. *What are the theological implications and practices for ministry with widows?*

In Chapter 18:1-3 of Luke’s gospel, Jesus told a parable to the people saying, “that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; seeing justice from him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary’ (The Word in Life Study Bible).” This widow could have remained quiet, but she was causing trouble for the judge, who had the authority and for a long time withheld justice from the widow. Yet, God intervened on her behalf avenging her worries. This is Butler’s finest hour, to

act on Jesus' behalf in bringing the ministry of caring for widows. Jesus is speaking to us today; it is God who avenges God's "own elect, who cry out day and night to Him [God]." We must act speedily as a sign of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Sociological/Organizational**

1. *What are the psychological and sociological concerns (social location) of widows?*
2. *Historically, how has Butler Church cared for widows? How can the church provide a supportive community for widows in its midst?*

The widow is in need of a caring community of believers. According to Lawrence Richards this is "community . . . Here God's provision for us is found in the church, not as an institution or building, but as fellow believers. Becoming a Christian means entering a relationship with other persons as well as with God: relationship that offers us the possibility of a rich community."<sup>12</sup>

Richard W. Sadler wrote, "Usually after the funeral, the widow is left alone with very little contact. The significant other has died leaving a large gap in the widow's soul. The deep relationship and intimate communication is lost. She calls out to her spouse with no reply . . . There is no relief for her pain and loneliness. Often there is a longing to go home to her heavenly abode to be with her beloved."<sup>13</sup>

3. *How can the church and society remove the stigma they have towards widows?*
4. *What are the political, economic, and social implications that affect the practice of ministry with widows?*

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Lawrence, quoted in Sadler, "A Strategy for Ministry to Widows in The Local Church," 73.

<sup>13</sup> Sadler, "A Strategy for Ministry to Widows in The Local Church," 73



## **Spiritual life and Practice**

We can never say too much about caring for our inner spirit. We need to find balance in our lives during times of stress and more so when dealing with the loss of a loved one. When someone dies we wonder where their soul resides. We began to question our faith and religion. The following questions seek to point us in the direction of caring for the mind, body and spirit of the widow.

- 1. What does the literature report concerning the spiritual life and practices of widows?*
- 2. What are the spiritual practices and traditions of worship and ritual that widows endure during the grieving experiences (of widowhood)?*
- 3. Grief after the death of a loved one is a lifelong issue. What should a holistic Christian response look like that will help Butler's widows gain a sense of belonging?*

## CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION PROCESS

### **Method of Evaluation 1: Initial Survey/Questionnaire.**

Participants (pastor, widows and leaders of the congregation) will complete a survey to determine the effectiveness of the demonstration project on the level of awareness for the need of a pastoral care widow's ministry in the congregation. The survey will give the respondents various modes of response depending on the question. For example, yes or no, circle the appropriate number and other responses were expected in that the participant gave specific details. The data from survey will be analyzed to determine the need for a widow's ministry.

### **Method of Evaluation 2: Participants/ and Volunteers Evaluation at every stage.**

Every professional and volunteer will be asked to complete a final evaluation (to be developed) on their personal assessment of the resources. Candidate will use the evaluation from the focus group on the professionals and volunteers, who gave their personal assessment of the development, implementation, and impact of the project that determined a level of effectiveness from their perspective. For instance, the evaluation rates the presenter using a numerical number (1 or 2) and in each area of competency an adjective was used to rate the degree of effectiveness. Also, if the presenter of the event was "organized" the participant/attendee will circle the number 2. If the presenter was "disorganized" the participant will circle 1. Additionally, the participant/attendee would

have had an opportunity to rate an event on a scale of 5 to 1 (5 as high and 1 is low). I will use the data to determine how effective the professionals and their information were for the focus group.

**Method of Evaluation 3: Exit questionnaires:**

Candidate will conduct an interview of participants and use an evaluation (see Appendix D) to determine the effectiveness of all the strategies (professionals, volunteers, Bible Study, preaching moment, workshop, literature, retreat and facilitator/presenters) set forth in this *Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows*.

## CHAPTER 6

### MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

This chapter is based on the collaborative efforts of my site team—people I recruited. These individuals come with many experiences as I introduce them to the reader. My site team members are Mrs. Mary Morton, a retired Assistant High School principal. Her specialization is in the areas of business and accounting. She has many years of civic service in the community as an officer in the NAACP, chairing the Education Committee, and was elected as the first Black Dean of the former Jay Monroe High School in New York City. She is an active member of Butler Memorial United Methodist Church (BMUMC) as a former Lay Leader and Speaker, member of the Education Committee and the Church Council, among her other church responsibilities. Reverend Dorethea Cretia is an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church. She serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry for the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She is a practicing Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Reverend Estella has been serving as deacon at BMUMC, Bronx, NY. She has been active on the conference and district level of the Churches committees; for the later, she chaired the District Council of Ministries. She served as the Director for the Lay Servant School Ministry. She has successfully written grants for Butler's after-school program and for its other youth outreach programs. All of these persons are widows and are able

to bring their own stories in the development of this demonstration project that will make a positive contribution to the successful completion of this demonstration project.

I emailed a completed Competency Assessment Tool to the site team with my self-assessment of ministry comments. The site team members were ask to assess my competency based on their past personal knowledge and perceptions of her in ministry, and that they make written comments for discussion in the planned meeting. One member of the team was not able to be present at this initial meeting. Therefore, she forwarded her written assessment comments and recommendations, which I shared with the other two site team members during the meeting.

On November 8, 2014, the site team members met with me to discuss my completed competency assessment tool. Reverend Carrie Smallwood, candidate for Doctor of Ministry degree began the discussion with an extensive review of her project, and how it would advance the ministry of Butler Memorial United Methodist Church.

After reviewing the responsibilities and work of the site team, members engaged in a frank and open discussion about the Competency Assessment Tool given to them by the candidate. Members congratulated me on my spiritual growth over the years. As the meeting continued, I led the discussion offering further explanations on those competencies the site team members needed further information. The members, for the most did agree with me on my self-assessment, in spite of those areas that needed some clarity.

#### **The Assessments:**

Carrie as an “**Administrator**” can continue, although she rated herself “start” on all of the categories of this competency skill. The site team members disagreed with her

assessment. In the discussion, they pointed out that she actively led the Butler Church's Building Program as an administrator. However, Carrie did not view the various aspects of her role in that program as an administrator, but as a leader. The site team told her, "You function as an administrator by seeing that things got done properly." The discussion persuaded Carrie that the work she performed while on the building program was administrative in nature.

Carrie as a "**Leader**" may continue in this category. Carrie's pastoral work as chaplain and in the parish involves deep work with individuals and systems. We will see in the site visits and as the project progresses how these skills continue, but they seem very good.

Carrie in her "**Pastoral**" skills can continue. Carrie has excellent pastoral skills with individuals as a chaplain. We will see as she gathers the group of widows how her work as group leader will go. She needed to explain what she meant by "appropriate boundaries" in her work as chaplain. Carrie says that as a professional counselor and chaplain it is important that "I maintain personal boundaries whether it is physical or verbal in caring for persons with emotional illness and that it was not wrongly understood by the patient."

Carrie as a "**Prophetic Agent**" can continue in most of the categories, but she can develop in this category her "skill in analyzing social structures and the ability to diagnose the roots of social problems." [We] think Carrie, "could spell out what the roots of the neglect of widows are: sexism, or ageism, and how prevalent these problems are in the church. Carrie's choice of topic is certainly a prophetic one and Carrie has the courage of her conviction!" Carrie shared her need to have a prophetic voice for widows

in the church. In further discussion, she was told, “In the past, you were sometimes harsh with comments to others and I feel this has changed.” There were times “you could have said things differently.” Carrie welcomed these comments from the site team because “I also recognized that I did not need to be overly assertive in presenting my point of view.” I agree with this assessment as an evidence of my spiritual growth. I asked that my site team members continue with this type of constructive criticism of me during the project.

Carrie as a “**Theologian**” may continue. Carrie is well versed in the Bible and theological work; we will see witness in her use of the book of Ruth in this project. She has excellent knowledge of the secular discipline of psychology from her training and work as a chaplain and in the correctional system. She can continue all categories, however, may need to develop her ability to use ethical implications of particular problems. She could spell out the ethical problem for the congregation neglecting and perhaps devaluing older women and widows, who are such a large and active part of the church.

Carrie as a “**Counselor**” can continue in this skill, her intensive work as a chaplain shows her excellent counseling skills.

Carrie as a “**Spiritual Leader**” can continue in this area. She feels she does not give herself enough time to rest nor to appreciate her accomplishments. She recognizes she needs to take better care of herself. She pointed out to her site team that she wanted to include some practices of self-care as she goes through this project.

Carrie as for her “**Interpersonal**” skills can continue. These skills seem to be her strength, as a mature woman experienced in working with others.

Carrie as for “**Professional**” can work to develop in the area of “(a), demonstrates skill in written communication, and is able to express him or herself well in written work.” In [our] experience with Carrie’s writing over several years including the process of her ordination and now, [we] see good improvement in the flow of her writing. However, there are still significant grammatical errors, which detract from her message, which could use more work.

Overall, Carrie’s assessment of herself needed to be more “explicit” with examples that demonstrated what she actually does under each of the competencies, and not write in phrases, but with complete sentences. However, in the meeting she was able to articulate her passions for doing ministry with clarity.



### **Competencies Chosen for Development by the Site Team and Candidate**

Rev. Dorothea Crites, Mrs. Mary Morton, Rev. Estella Abel, and Candidate agreed to work on the following competencies during this demonstration project:

- I Professional Skills:** Carrie needs to grow in her ability to communicate in her written material that provides clarity. Her excellent ideas are inadvertently lost in her writing ability.

#### **Strategies:**

- A. I will attend three sessions in the writing lab at New York Theological Seminary with Audrey Raden during the writing of my pamphlet.
- B. I will seek a competent editor to proof read my written material before submitting it for approval.
- C. I will seek support for the development of my pamphlet from the focus group.

**Evaluation:** I will have Ms. Audrey Raden at NYTS writing center do an assessment of my written materials to determine if I have presented it with clarity

- II Spiritual Leader (Self-Care):** Carrie needs to recognize the need to take time out of her busy schedule for spiritual replenishment as a caregiver. Carrie needs to grow in her practice of spiritual disciplines that will enable her to motivate others as a caregiver, that she enjoys her life's accomplishments while advancing her career.

#### **Strategies:**

- A. I will work with Rev. Dr. Gordon Edwards, Therapist, and Mentor to achieve maximum self-care.

- B. I will attend the “Healthy Living in the Midst of Moral Dissonance,” by Dr. Larry Graham, Ph.D., and speaker. The United Methodist Endorsement Agency, Board of Higher Education, and Ministry sponsor the event.
- C. I will participate in a daily reading of *Beatitudes: Living with Blessings, Meditation, and Prayer*, (1997) by Ronald Lello.
- D. I will engage in a nutrition program to reduce my body weight by 25 pounds by the completion of this project.

**Evaluation:** Carrie’s mentor will complete an evaluation of her commitment and progress to the above programs.

**III Prophetic Agent:** To bring attention so that the church becomes intentional and committed to a long-term outreach ministry of caring for widows. To be a voice that advocates awareness and education of social injustices of widows in the church and in a changing world. To be a voice that develops skills for women that analyzes social structures while developing the ability to diagnose the roots of social problems affecting widows.

**Strategies:**

- A. I will grow in my ability to network with other civic and social organizations advocating for widows support.
- B. I will search and develop literature from the internet and library that supports the ministry of widows.

C. I will compile statistics that speak adversely concerning the plight of widows in this country. These statistics will look at the cultural, social, economic, political, and religious biases among various groups of widows.

**Evaluation:** I will compare the compiled data to the data received from the widows in the focus group. I will analysis the data to determine its significance and it affects widows' spirituality.

## **APPENDICES:**

# APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

Date	Task	Tools	Person Responsible:
Jan 2015	DPP Approval	Proposal project	Dr. Fields/Dr. W. Lundy
	Start my research	Librarian for research tips	Carrie Smallwood
	Meeting with Advisor	Bring copy of DPP	Dr. N. Fields
	Telephone conference with site team members	Bring copy of DPP	Carrie Smallwood
	Meet with Site Team	DPP	Carrie Smallwood
Feb 2015	Start DPP and conduct recruitment for Goals 1, and 2	Get names and telephone numbers, addresses	Carrie Smallwood
	Goal 1- Implement strategy I and 2; Recruitment for the focus group	Send the survey/questionnaires to pastor/Leaders	Carrie Smallwood
	Meet the with the UMW group recruit widows for focus group	Have a survey/questionnaire completed	Carrie Smallwood
Mar 2015	Meet with the focus group An Introduction session	Have an evaluation completed	Carrie Smallwood
	Schedule retreat for the Focus Group	Have prepared literature/questionnaire	Carrie Smallwood
April 2015	Meet with the advisor	bring the DPP	Dr. N. Fields
	Contact a licensed Pastoral Counselor to lead the retreat	Provide a Theme	Carrie Smallwood
	Workshop for the focus group		
	Meet with mentor		Rev. Dr. Edwards
May 2015			
Saturday AM	Retreat for focus group	Provide Material for group	Trained Leader
June 2015	Research in Library/internet		Carrie Smallwood
	Meet with site team		
August 2015	Preach Moment	Butler Church	
Sept 2015	Implement strategy for pamphlet		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Tools</b>	<b>Person Responsible:</b>
	Meeting with advisor		
	Meet with mentor		Rev. Dr. Edwards
	Meet at the writing center	NYTS	Audrey Raden
Oct 2015	Continue implementing the writing of the handbook	Library	Site team members/Carrie Smallwood
	Implementation of strategy 3:1 make hand book available to 20 pastors	Mail/questionnaire	Carrie Smallwood
	To the writing center	NYTS	Audrey Raden
Nov 2015	Meeting with Advisor	Telephone call	Carrie Smallwood
	Began analyzing the data from the questionnaire	Library	Carrie Smallwood
	Start writing the first draft of my Dissertation		Carrie Smallwood

## APPENDIX B: BUDGET

<b>Budget Items:</b>	<b>Cost/Amount:</b>
Office Supplies	\$200.00
Postage	\$150.00
Printing/Copies	\$200.00
Travel/Meals	\$300.00
Administrative	\$ 50.00
Site Team Meetings	\$400.00
Miscellaneous: food	\$200.00
Editor	\$600.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$2,100.00</b>

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF INITIAL SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE:

- A. I am a widow. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- B. I am aware of Bible passages that address the need of widows. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- C. Are you aware of any Bible stories concerning widows in the Bible?
- D. My spouse has a parent who is widowed. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- E. Do you know a widow in our congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- F. Have you had a conversation with a widow in the past three months? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- G. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- H. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year?  
Name Two: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- I. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows? Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_.
- J. What resources are available to widows in the congregation?  
List two things: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_.
- K. Please rate your congregations' level of activity on caring for widows, using a  
scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good).  
Circle the appropriate number: 1 2 3 4 5
- L. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow ministry?  
Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good):  
Circle the appropriate number: 1 2 3 4 5
- M. If you are a widow, are living: Alone \_\_\_\_\_, or with relatives \_\_\_\_\_?



Continue this survey if you are a widow.

Responds to the following to determine your personal experience:

1. Do you ever wish you had someone to counsel you? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
2. Do you sometimes feel misunderstood? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
3. Being a widow, you are well aware of the frustrations, and fears of widowhood.  
With this in mind, answer the questions below:  
(1) If you were a younger member of the church, how would you help widows?  
(2) What would you say to the church to help them understand the widow's needs?
4. Would it be helpful if the church had a ministry that outreach to widows?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
5. What are some areas the Church should assist the widow?  
Please circle all the appropriate responses.  
  
A. Financial B. Visitation C. Service Tasks D. Special Ministries
6. What kind of assistance is most helpful for widows? Name five things:
7. Overall, how do you feel your church is doing in taking care of the widows?  
Please circle the best response:  
Poorly Fair Good Very Good Excellent
8. Do you feel that it is the church's place to assist widows? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
9. Who usually checks on you? Please circle the answer that applies:  
  
Family Neighbor Pastor Church member Another Widow Others
10. Do you feel you are forgotten by the congregation? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
11. Do you feel that your church genuinely loves and cares for you? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
12. How did your pastor/church minister to your needs during the first year of your grieving?
13. Are you willing to participate in a project to form a widow's ministry in this congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

APPENDIX D:  
PARTICIPANTS AND VOLUNTEERS EVALUATION AT EVERY STAGE:

The presenter was:

1. Organized 2\_\_\_\_ Disorganized 1\_\_\_\_
2. Clear 2\_\_\_\_ Unclear 1\_\_\_\_
3. Interesting 2\_\_\_\_ Uninteresting 1\_\_\_\_
4. Professionally presented 2\_\_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented 1\_\_\_\_
5. Please rate the overall usefulness of today's event using the scale below:

1 = poor 2 = fair 3 = good 4 = above average 5 = Excellent

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE OF EXIT INTERVIEW/EVALUATION:

Was this project useful in starting a widow's ministry in our church? Yes \_\_\_ or No \_\_\_.

Will you share this resource with other clergy and widows? Yes \_\_\_ or No \_\_\_.

What was least helpful about this resource? \_\_\_\_\_.

How would you rate the content of the pamphlet produced by this project?  
High 5 4 3 2 1 Low

How this project impacted your awareness and understanding of widows?

How many widows in the congregation responded to the need for a Widows Ministry in the congregation?

What new information did you learn by participating in this project?

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Appendix B  
Cover Letters, Flyer, Questionnaires and Evaluations

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon  
1260 Adee Ave  
Bronx, NY 10469

March 9, 2015

Re: Proposal for a Widow's Ministry  
Questionnaire

Dear Sisters and Brothers;

Grace and Peace to you! I thank everyone and the Butler Church Council for this opportunity to be of service in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In November 2014, I proposed to the Butler Church Council a widows' ministry for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one or a significant other. I also shared my personal experience of loss. Perhaps you have had this life changing experience, and you know of someone who is grieving—an aunt, a mother, a grandmother, a sister or a close friend at one time. However, as I reflect, it has been my experience that people take it for granted that life for a widow is easy and life simply continues as usual. But, in reality widows are overwhelmed by challenges they have not conceived after the death of a love one. Therefore, I envision bringing together a supportive community of widows, who will be there for one another and this involves the congregation's participation.

More importantly, I desire to bring awareness to the congregation and the larger community to care for widows. In the book of Acts chapter 6:1-6, it tells us that the "Hellenists complained against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food (NRSV)." The concept of neglect encompasses many areas of a person's life—financial, spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and others. I ask you, "What can it be like if our Church began to reach out to the widows?" It is my belief, as Christians, we are under a biblical mandate to care for widows and those in need.

During the past year, I began the groundwork for this vision with a project proposal as part of my spiritual and professional development while attending New York Theological Seminary, doctoral program. Your participation is needed in this project to establish the widows' ministry by completing the attached questionnaire. This will help me to develop a planning group and resources to organize a widow's ministry. I have attached a questionnaire for your use. I am asking that you complete it (confidentiality is respected) and return it to me as soon as possible. You need only to complete one questionnaire for this project. This is an effort to reach out to leaders, and widows in the congregation with a questionnaire to determine the needs.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation by completing the questionnaire. If you have questions please feel free to contact me at 718 652-1321 or email: [csmallwood1260@optinmum.net](mailto:csmallwood1260@optinmum.net). Again, I thank you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon

Rev. Carrie M. Smallwood, Deacon  
1260 Adee Ave  
Bronx, NY 10469

February 9, 2015

Rev. Allen Pinckney, Pastor  
Butler Memorial United Methodist Church  
3920 Paulding Ave  
Bronx, NY 10466

Dear Rev. Dr. Allen Pinckney;

Grace and Peace to you, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

In November 2014, I came to Butler's Church Council meeting requesting that, I conduct a demonstration project—"A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows." At that time, I also shared that I am attending New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) doctoral degree program. Since then, I am pleased to report that, I have completed my written proposal. It has the approval of Dr. Nancy Fields, Advisor and Dr. Wanda Lundy, Director of Doctor of Ministry Programs that, I can go forward with my project in my ministry setting at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church. Therefore, I thank you for allowing me to conduct my project as part of my professional development and that it promises to enhance the ministry in this congregation.

Again, I believe God has given me this vision to be an advocate for widows. However, I must plan for your involvement as the pastor, the leaders in the congregation and the widows for this vision to be a reality. To start, I am asking for your cooperation and from each member of the Church Council to complete a questionnaire. I am asking for assistance in recruiting widows in the congregation and from the community, and that the names are given to Rev. Abel or Mrs. Morton or feel free to contact me directly. And, I am requesting assistance in scheduling dates, times and space for a workshop and retreat, and Bible study on the Book of Ruth. I am requesting (1) preaching moment. I am envisioning that this project will commence in March and end in October 2015 of this year. As a follow up, in December 2015, it is my hope to return to the Church Council to report on the development of an organized widows' ministry in this congregation

I have attached a copy of the questionnaire for your use. I am asking if you can complete it as soon as possible and return it to me at the above address. At the March Church Council meeting, I am asking that a few minutes be given for the members to complete a questionnaire (copies will be supplied).

Again, I thank you for your assistance and an opportunity to work with the widows in Butler UMC congregation. If you have questions please call me at 718-652-1321 or email: [csmallwood1260@optimum.net](mailto:csmallwood1260@optimum.net) or credandgreen@aol.com.

Sincerely,

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon

CC:

Sis Maxine Palacio, Chair of Council  
Sis Carol Daniels, Chair of Pastor Parish Relations

Rev. Carrie Smallwood  
1260 Adee Ave  
Bronx, NY 10469

March 4, 2015

Dear Sisters,

Grace and Peace In the Name of Jesus Christ! It is my prayer that all is well with you.

I have been thinking about all of us this past year. Like most of you, we have lost a love one. Eight years ago, I became a widow—my husband died after a short illness. Afterward, it was a very trying time, yet, God was there helping me to overcome my loss as I was grieving.

More than ever, I am sure God has placed you in my heart. I have been in pastoral ministry for several years now and enjoyed the experiences and challenges in being a Chaplain in a hospital. While in the ministry, I thank God for being the source of my strength as God was preparing me to do greater works.

Undoubtedly, I believe God has called me into a new direction, which is to care for widows like my-self. I am very grateful that I can say, God's grace has been more than sufficient in my new identity—a widow. Similarly, I feel there are widows in my/our community, they have experience personal peace. Yet, I don't believe God want us to hide God's love from those, who might be feeling the struggles of grief. For this reason, I am contacting you because we are our sister's keeper.

I believe, God has given me this vision to establish a ministry to empower other widows. God want us widows to share our strength and courage that none of us suffer in isolation and loneliness, that grief gives us. As widows we can find new purpose and meaning in life. We can discover rewarding insights as women of God as we grow in our community together. These are just a few of the things I know God want for us as widows. Therefore, I am calling on you to join me on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 10:00am until 12:00noon for a Widow's Seminar to be held at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church.

I have included a flyer with information that will help us to establish this ministry together. I thank you in advance for responding to this call. Please feel free and share this information with another person in your family and circles of friends. This is an open gathering to all.

God Blessings,

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Facilitator



**Purpose:**

**To meet the spiritual needs of women who have lost their husbands or significant other to death.**

**Mission/Vision:**

**To find purpose & meaning in life as a widow.**

**To develop & grow in a personal relationship with God.**

**To establish a strong support systems for widows seeking new avenues of Christian service.**

**PHASE I Finding Widows**

**PHASE II Minister to the widow**

**PHASE III Empower the widows and congregation**

**WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**!!COMING SOON!!**

**Place:**

**Butler Memorial United Methodist Church**

**3920Paulding Ave, Bronx, NY 10466**

**Facilitator: Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon**

**More Information Call: 718-652-132**

A PASTORAL CARE MODEL OF CARING FOR WIDOWS  
EVALUATION FORM

Date: April 22, 2015

Name: Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Leader

Title of Event: Bible Study Session #1

The study was:

1. Organized \_\_\_\_ Disorganized \_\_\_\_
2. Clear \_\_\_\_ Unclear \_\_\_\_
3. Interesting \_\_\_\_ Uninteresting \_\_\_\_
4. Professionally presented \_\_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented \_\_\_\_
5. Sensitive to widows needs \_\_\_\_ Insensitive to widows needs \_\_\_\_
6. Information related to my needs \_\_\_\_ Information unrelated to my needs \_\_\_\_
7. Biblical connection \_\_\_\_ Un-Biblical connection \_\_\_\_
8. The retreat increased my awareness of widows needs \_\_\_\_ It did not increase my awareness of widows needs \_\_\_\_
9. What could have been done differently in this retreat?

10. Please rate the overall usefulness of today's Retreat using the scale below:

1 = poor \_\_\_\_ 2 = fair \_\_\_\_ 3 = good \_\_\_\_ 4 = above average \_\_\_\_ 5 = Excellent \_\_\_\_

A PASTORAL CARE MODEL OF CARING FOR WIDOWS  
EVALUATION FORM

Date: April 29, 2015

Name: Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Leader

Title of Event: Bible Study Session #2

The study was:

Organized \_\_\_\_ Disorganized \_\_\_\_

Clear \_\_\_\_ Unclear \_\_\_\_

Interesting \_\_\_\_ Uninteresting \_\_\_\_

Professionally presented \_\_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented \_\_\_\_

Sensitive to widows needs \_\_\_\_ Insensitive to widows needs \_\_\_\_

Information related to my needs \_\_\_\_ Information unrelated to my needs \_\_\_\_

11. Biblical connection \_\_\_\_ Un-Biblical connection \_\_\_\_

12. The retreat increased my awareness of widows needs \_\_\_\_ It did not increase my  
awareness of widows needs \_\_\_\_

13. What could have been done differently in this retreat?

14. Please rate the overall usefulness of today's Retreat using the scale below:

1 = poor \_\_\_\_ 2 = fair \_\_\_\_ 3 = good \_\_\_\_ 4 = above average \_\_\_\_ 5 = Excellent \_\_\_\_



A PASTORAL CARE MODEL OF CARING FOR WIDOWS  
EVALUATION FORM

Date: May 6, 2015

Name: Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Leader

Title of Event: Bible Study Session #3

The study was:

15. Organized \_\_\_ Disorganized \_\_\_

16. Clear \_\_\_ Unclear \_\_\_

17. Interesting \_\_\_ Uninteresting \_\_\_

18. Professionally presented \_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented \_\_\_

19. Sensitive to widows needs \_\_\_ Insensitive to widows needs \_\_\_

20. Information related to my needs \_\_\_ Information unrelated to my needs \_\_\_

21. Biblical connection \_\_\_ Un-Biblical connection \_\_\_

22. The retreat increased my awareness of widows needs \_\_\_ It did not increase my  
awareness of widows needs \_\_\_

23. What could have been done differently in this retreat?

24. Please rate the overall usefulness of today's Retreat using the scale below:

1 = poor \_\_\_ 2 = fair \_\_\_ 3 = good \_\_\_ 4 = above average \_\_\_ 5 = Excellent \_\_\_

25. What are the ways the Church can take care of widows?"

## DATA FROM THE INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRES:

The 70 questionnaires distributed (25 returned) were used to determine the need for a widows' ministry Butler congregation among 39 members of the Church Council, 1 to the Pastor and 30 to the United Methodist Women organization. It was a two part questionnaire, where all of the participants were asked to respond to part A (A thru M) and only those who were widows responded to Part B (1 thru 13). The numerical values below represents the responses to each item on the instrument from the returned questionnaires regardless if it was complete or incomplete questionnaire submitted. The data does shows the level of awareness among this group of participants in the questionnaire. In Part A items: A – E – F – G – L and in Part B item 9 show above 90%, these items totaled between 21- 23. For the same parts items: C – D- I – K and in Part B: 1 -2- 4- shows 75%, these items totaled 14-19. All of the other totals are between 2 -13. The higher the total I believe indicated awareness and concern for a widow's ministry in spite of the incompleteness of the questionnaire. It also shows that specific areas of a widow's life is of concern to some people. In Part A items # 4 and 13 shows that participants wanted the widow's ministry

- A. I am a widow. Yes=7, No =15.
- B. I am aware of Bible passages that address the need of widows Yes= 1, NO = 8.
- C. Are you aware of any Bible stories concerning widows in the Bible? Yes =14, No =5.
- D. My spouse has a parent who is widowed Yes =3, No 16
- E. Do you know a widow in our congregation? Yes = 20, No = 3.
- F. Have you had a conversation with a widow in the past three months? Yes =12, No = 9.
- G. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation? Yes =4, No = 17.
- H. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year?  
AARP=1, Bible =3
- I. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows? Yes = 11, No =7
- J. What resources are available to widows in the congregation? Fellowship =1, Pastor = 1.
- K. Please rate your congregation' level of activity on caring for widows, using a scale of 1 to 5 (1= not at all and 5 = very good).  
1 = 15, 2= 4, 3= 0, 4 = 0, 5 = 0.
- L. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow's ministry? Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all and 5 = very good).  
1 = 2, 2 = 0, 3 = 1, 4 = 6, 5 = 13.
- M. If you are a widow, are you living: Alone = 8, or with relatives = 3, others unknown.

ONLY WIDOWS CONTINUE FROM HERE:

1. Do you ever wish you had someone to counsel you? Yes = 8, No = 6.
2. Do you sometimes feel misunderstood? Yes = 6, No = 8.
3. Being a widow, you are well aware of the frustrations, and fears of widowhood, With this in mind, answer the question below:
  - (1) If you were a younger member of the church, how would you help widows?  
Responses: Listen and visitation with words of comfort.
  - (2) What would you say to the church to help them understand the widow's needs?  
Responses: Listening and counseling.
4. Would it be helpful if the church had a ministry that outreach to widows? Yes = 14, No = 0.
5. What are some area the church should assist widows? Financial = 2, Visitations = 5, Service Tasks = 7 and Special Ministries = 8.
6. What kind of assistance is most helpful for widows? Name five things:  
Talk with someone, Financial, Someone to have dinners with sometimes, Calls, visit, Bible Study, Transportation for hopping, Social Services, Spirituality, Relay information, Emergency care Be a place can say is reliability and Emotional support.
7. Overall, how do you feel your church is doing in taking care of the widows? Poorly = 4, Fair = 3 Good = 3 Very Good = 1.
8. Do you feel that it is the church's place to assist widows? Yes = 9, No = 4.
9. Who usually checks on you? Please circle the answers that applies:  
Family = 8, Neighbors = 5, Pastor = 0, Church member = 6, another widow = 1, others = 2.
10. Do you feel you are forgotten by the congregation? Yes = 1, No = 9.
11. Do you feel that your church genuinely loves and care for you? Yes = 8, No = 2 Not at all = 1.
12. How did your pastor/church minister to your needs during the first year of your grieving? Good = 1, None = 1.
13. Are you willing to participate in a project to form a widow's ministry in this congregation? Yes = 10. No = 1.

**A Pastoral Care Model of Caring For Widows  
Questionnaire**

Please complete this questionnaire as part of a tool to determine the needs of widows in your congregation. The information will only\* be used to develop a widow's ministry. Please return both pages.

- A. I am a widow. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- B. I am aware of Bible passages that address the need of widows. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- C. Are you aware of any Bible stories concerning widows in the Bible? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- D. My spouse has a parent who is widowed. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- E. Do you know a widow in our congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- F. Have you had a conversation with a widow in the past three months? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- G. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
- H. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year?  
Name Two: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ or check None \_\_\_\_\_
- I. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows? Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_.
- J. What resources are available to widows in the congregation?  
List two things: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_.
- K. Please rate your congregations' level of activity on caring for widows, using a  
scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good).  
Circle the appropriate number: 1 2 3 4 5
- L. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow ministry?  
Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good):  
Circle the appropriate number: 1 2 3 4 5
- M. If you are a widow, are you living: Alone \_\_\_\_\_, or with relatives \_\_\_\_\_?

Continue this questionnaire if you are a widow.

Respond to the following to determine your personal experience:

16. Do you ever wish you had someone to counsel you? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

17. Do you sometimes feel misunderstood? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

18. Being a widow, you are well aware of the frustrations, and fears of widowhood.

With this in mind, answer the questions below:

(1) If you were a younger member of the church, how would you help widows?

(2) What would you say to the church to help them understand the widow's needs?

19. Would it be helpful if the church had a ministry that outreach to widows?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

20. What are some areas the Church should assist the widow?

Please circle all the appropriate responses.

A. Financial B. Visitation C. Service Tasks D. Special Ministries

21. What kind of assistance is most helpful for widows? Name five things:

22. Overall, how do you feel your church is doing in taking care of the widows?

Please circle the best response:

Poorly Fair Good Very Good Excellent

23. Do you feel that it is the church's place to assist widows? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

24. Who usually checks on you? Please circle the answer that applies:

Family Neighbor Pastor Church member Another Widow Others

25. Do you feel you are forgotten by the congregation? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

26. Do you feel that your church genuinely loves and cares for you? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

27. How did your pastor/church minister to your needs during the first year of your grieving?

28. Are you willing to participate in a project to form a widow's ministry in this congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

Appendix C  
Evaluation of Widow's Seminar

WIDOWS' MINISTRY SEMINAR  
EVALUATION FORM

Date: 3/28/2015

Presenter's Name: Mrs. Milda Bailey, Facilitator

The presenter was (check one):

- A. Organize \_\_\_\_ Disorganized \_\_\_\_
- B. Clear \_\_\_\_ Unclear \_\_\_\_
- C. Interesting \_\_\_\_ Uninteresting \_\_\_\_
- D. Professionally presented \_\_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented \_\_\_\_
- E. I think this resource will enhance the awareness of widows in the congregation.  
Yes \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_.
- F. Please rate the usefulness of this resource by the congregation. Please use the  
scale below (check one):
  - 1 = Poor \_\_\_\_
  - 2 = Fair \_\_\_\_
  - 3 = Good \_\_\_\_
  - 4 = Above Average \_\_\_\_
  - 5 = Excellent \_\_\_\_
- G. I will share this information with others. Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

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Appendix D  
Evaluation of Widow's Retreat and Facilitator

**WIDOWS' MINISTRY RETREAT  
EVALUATION FORM**

Date: 6/27/2015

Presenter's Name: Rev. Marcia White-Smith

The presenter was (check one):

- A. Organize \_\_\_\_ Disorganized \_\_\_\_
- B. Clear \_\_\_\_ Unclear \_\_\_\_
- C. Interesting \_\_\_\_ Uninteresting \_\_\_\_
- D. Professionally presented \_\_\_\_ Unprofessionally presented \_\_\_\_
- E. I think this resource will enhance the awareness of widows in the congregation.  
Yes \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_.
- F. Please rate the usefulness of this resource by the congregation. Please use the  
scale below (check one):
  - 1 = Poor \_\_\_\_
  - 2 = Fair \_\_\_\_
  - 3 = Good \_\_\_\_
  - 4 = Above Average \_\_\_\_
  - 5 = Excellent \_\_\_\_
- G. I will share today's information with others. Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

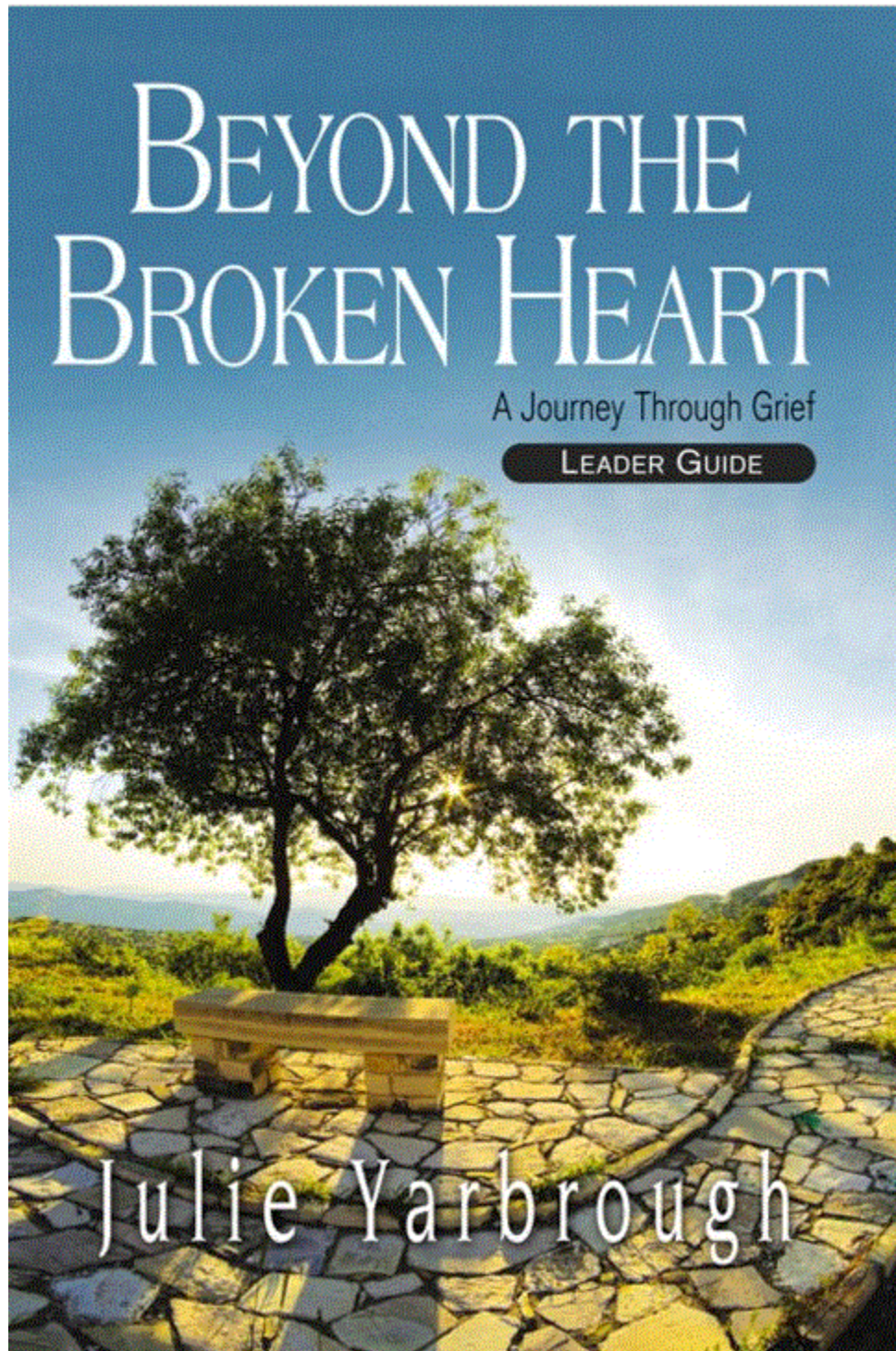
Additional Comments:

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Appendix E  
*Beyond the Broken Heart*





You are invited to a

# Widow's Ministry Seminar

A ministry for Women, who have lost their husband's or  
significant-other to death

Goals:

Introductions

What is grief?

Share and care discussions among attendees

Build a strong fellowship group

Make new friends in a caring, Christian atmosphere

Plans a formal widows Ministry that meets regularly

Complete a questionnaire

Place: Butler Memorial United Methodist Church

3920 Paulding Ave Bronx, NY 10466

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Saturday – 10:00am to 12:00 noon

Light breakfast provided

***For Information Contact Facilitator:***

***Rev. Carrie Smallwood at 718-652-1321 or email***

***csmallwood1260optimum.net***

Appendix G  
Widows' Retreat: Flyer and Program



# *Widows' Ministry Retreat*

*A ministry for women, who have lost their husbands  
or significant others to death.*

***BUTLER MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH***

***SATURDAY JUNE 27, 2015***

*10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.*

*At*

*Regis Care Center  
3200 Baychester Ave.  
Bronx, NY 10475*

***REV. CARRIE SMALLWOOD, DEACON AND ORGANIZER***

*Theme:*

***"WIDOWS: HEART TO HEART CONVERSATION"***

***Facilitator: Rev. Marcia White-Smith, M.Div., Pastor***

**Program**

***“Widows: Heart to Heart Conversation”***

*“As servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way; through great endurance ... by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God.... We are treated as ... poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2 Corinthians 6:4-10 NRSV).”*

*10:00 – 10:20 A. M. Gathering, Welcome, and Refreshments*

*Introductions*

*10:20 – 10:30 Morning Prayer*

*10:30 – 10:45 A.M. “Naming of the Widows Ministry”*

**Part I**

*10:45 A.M. - 12:15 P.M. “Widows: Heart to Heart Conversation”*

*Reflections on 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (30 minutes)*

*Self-Reflections on who we are at this time of our lives as widows.*

*Participants: Select a woman in or not in the Bible and speak about her; have a conversation with another widow. Why that particular woman was selected by you? (15 minutes)*

*Group Sharing and Discussion (45 minutes)*

***(Table Grace)***

***12:00 – 12:30 P.M. Lunch***

**Part II**

*1:00 – 2:00 P.M. Part Two: “Widows: Looking Beyond Ourselves”*

*Participants: What three words would I use to characterize who I am? Share with the group why you chose the three words.*

*(40 minutes)*

*Words of Appreciation*

*Complete Evaluations*

*2:00P.M. – Closing Prayer*

Appendix H  
Pamphlet Heart to Heart Widows' Ministry and Worksheet

***Heart to Heart***  
***WIDOWS' MINISTRY***

*A ministry of outreach, support and caring  
for women who have lost husbands and significant  
others*



Ministry Resource

Butler Memorial United Methodist Church  
3920 Paulding Ave. Bronx NY 10469

## ***INTRODUCTION:***

The “*Heart to Heart Widow’s Ministry*” was established out of the personal experiences of one widow, who saw her journey not as an isolated personal experience, but as an experience affecting other widows, who were also seeking new meaning in life. Subsequently, in conversations there were other women going through similar challenges. As with any loss, grieving is a lifelong experience that overwhelms the person at the least unexpected moment. For a widow, she must then ask herself, who can she call on for support? Can she draw on her family, friends, and faith community as she copes with her loss of support?

Widows are silently grieving their loss and in many cases are abandoned by those closest to her, may it be her family or faith community. Grief is not selective of whom it effects. For these reasons the “*Heart to Hearth Widow’s Ministry*,” was created as a support group for widows, who have lost their loved ones to death. It attempts to bridge relationships as the widow redefines her new identity—widowhood. Nothing is more important than for her to resume her spiritual, social, and emotional wholeness after an immediate loss. However, widows are very well aware that life has been transformed at no fault of her doing. Yet, for many, life does not always take on the healthy acceptance of newness.

***SUPPORTIVE CARE:***

- During the first two years of the new widow's loss she will have the support of the group and a mentor.

***THE “Heart to Heart Widow’s Ministry” CAN RESPOND:***

- By building a strong fellowship group of widows that reaches out to one another. Listening to the new widow is very important during the first year—don’t ask closed ended questions.
- By providing an atmosphere to make new friends.
- By sharing and caring in a spiritual environment.
- By mentoring all new widows regardless of faith.
- By providing resources—spiritual literature, and etc.

***MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT PREPARED:***

- Bereavement is when you express emotions that occurs following a loss of spouse, job, close friend, a child, divorce, pet and other important events/objects.
- Grief is a natural part of life and is a life long journey. Grief can overwhelm you initially. But, try not to neglect your own needs. It is mostly felt as temporary emotions of discomfort.

***LOSS AFFECTS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS:***

- *Disbelief* immediately after a death it is hard to come to terms with the loss.
- *Angry* feelings that you were abandon may occur.

- *Fear* that causes us to face our own fears of dying.
- *Physical problems* such as weight loss or gain, anxiety with extreme tiredness.
- *Guilt* feeling of regret that things might you have done, said, or not said to the loved one.
- *Depression* deep sadness is a part of bereavement. But it can trigger a lasting depression that requires help.
- *Personal growth* is our expectation—coming to term with your loss and being able to develop a new outlook on life embodying joy, peace and internal satisfaction.

#### ***THE CHURCHES' INVOLVEMENT:***

- Be intentional about teaching the congregation the biblical mandate, social, emotional and spiritual need to care for widows.
- Have on its Church Council a representative for the widow's ministry-advocating the needs of widows.
- Pastoral care by a team of first responders in the congregation (Social Workers, Psychologist and Counselors) to assist the pastor in caring for widows.
- Shortly after the funeral and burial of the love one there ought to be a phone call to the new widow within the first week and thereafter at least monthly during the first year. The earlier the contact is made it may help the widow to remain visible in the congregation.



- Plan an educational seminar around the concerns of widows for the entire congregation.
- Provide a network of resources (directory) capable of assisting widows with household maintenance issues.
- For those widows who are living alone provide the name of a contact person on file.
- Be aware of confidentiality in caring for widows.
- Remember that asking for help and receiving help often depends on good timing. If done with respect and dignity the widow may be more than appreciative of the care given. The purpose is not to make the widow feel powerless and vulnerable in her new identity.

***PLANNED EVENTS:***

- Monthly Support Group Meetings (for widows only)
- Yearly spring retreat and workshop with a guest speaker (for widows only)
- Annual Widow's Recognition Day
- Annual seminar for the continued education of members of the congregation on the issues of widows (opened to everyone)
- Annual Widow's Luncheon (opened to everyone)
- Bible Study (opened to everyone)
- Networking activities in the community.

***WIDOWS CHECK LIST:***

This check list is in no way a complete list of things the widow needs to do. We ask that you be as vigilant as possible, that you are not taken advantage of by someone, who doesn't have your best interest.

- Complete an inventory of ***all*** your love one assets, especially those obligations/liability with your name attached, such as mortgage and utility bills, credit cards and etc.
- Contact Social Security Administration, you may qualify for \$250 and depending on your age you might be eligible for widows benefits
- Consider Social Security Income if there are disabled and/or minor children involved
- Get legal consultation if necessary from an attorney that deals with estate planning only
- Contact the Bank Manager where your business is conducted
- Get at least 5 original copies of the death certificate (only give an original copy if necessary to conduct your affairs)
- Contact Department of Motor Vehicle if applicable
- Contact former employer(s) of your love one for possible life insurance policies, many companies provide survivors benefits
- Check for Military Benefits if spouse was in any branch of the military
- A subscription to AARP for those 50+ is suggested

***PERSONAL NOTES:***

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**PURPOSE:**

- To alert the Church of the biblical mandate to care for widows Acts 6:1-6 and Timothy 5:3-16).
- To meet the spiritual needs of women who have lost their husbands or significant others to death.

**MISSION:**

- To find purpose and meaning in life as a widow.
- To develop and grow in a personal relationship with God.
- To establish a strong support systems of widows seeking new avenues of supportive services.

**VISION**

- Finding widows
- Minister to the widow
- Empower the widow and congregation of the biblical mandate of caring for widows
- A non-denominational ministry emphasis

**For Information Contact:**

Heart to Heart Widow's Ministry  
Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Organizer  
C/O Butler Memorial United Methodist Church  
3920 Paulding Ave  
Bronx, NY 10466  
Call: 718-652-1321  
Email: [credandgreen@aol.com](mailto:credandgreen@aol.com)  
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## WIDOW'S MINISTRY WORKSHOP WORKSHEET

May 23, 2015

Our agenda for this meeting will primarily be on the development of a pamphlet to be used as a resource in the congregation. Below are some of the possible task we will be working on together:

- A. Assist with developing a pamphlet (handbook) as a resource for congregations to care for widows.
- B. The planning group will give the widow's ministry a formal name that will be recognize in the congregation and by other support groups in the community.
- C. The planning group will affirm the purpose, vision and mission of the Widow's Ministry.
  - a. How can the church respond to the new widow in the congregation?
  - b. Identify a leadership team of widows to oversee the activities of the Widow Ministry.
- D. The planning group will identify the needs and challenges of the new widow.
  - a. How will the church care for the new widow?
  - b. How will the church continue to provide a long term presence in the life of widows?
  - c. Plan social events for widows.
- D. The planning group will identify expectations for the Widow's Ministry. For example, a widow can be assigned for a period of time to mentor a new widow, who has lost their husband or significant other.
- E. The planning group will identify resources to help widows. Such as, books, magazines, and organizations

Thank you in advance, come with your ideas and suggestion for formal name. **New participants** are welcome to come to this planning meeting and share their ideas for the Widow's Ministry. Please share this information with another widow. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me at [credandgreen@aol.com](mailto:credandgreen@aol.com) or 718 652-1321.

Rev. Carrie Smallwood,  
Deacon and Facilitator

PS: There will be a widow's retreat on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, 10AM until 2PM. Details are being finalized for this event. Please put this date on your calendar and invite another widow.

Appendix I  
MDUMC: Cover Letter, Questionnaire and Evaluation

Rev. Carrie M. Smallwood, Deacon  
1260 Adeo Ave  
Bronx, NY 10469

June 30, 2015

Dear Pastor;

Grace and Peace to you, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am conducting a demonstration project—"A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows," at Butler Memorial United Methodist Church, Bronx, New York. This project is part of my studies at New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) in the doctoral degree program. As part of my professional development, it promises to enhance the ministry in this congregation and prayerfully across the Metropolitan District of the United Methodist Church.

Personally, I believe God has given me this vision to be an advocate for widows. Therefore, I am soliciting your participation as pastor, and leader of your congregation that this vision comes to fruition by completing a questionnaire and evaluation. Your involvement will further determine the need for this ministry and hopefully bring witness of God's grace to care for widows.

I have included a copy of the questionnaire and an evaluation form for your use. I am asking that you complete it as soon as possible and return it in the enclosed addressed envelope.

Again, I thank you for your assistance. If you have questions please call me at 718-652-1321 or email: credandgreen@aol.com.

Sincerely,

Rev. Carrie Smallwood, Deacon

Attachment: Questionnaire and Evaluation/Pamphlet

### **Data from the Questionnaire and Evaluation MDUMC Pastors**

Ten Questionnaires and evaluations with a copy of the pamphlet were mailed to 10 pastors in the MDUMC's there were returned. The data represents the three pastors who return the Questionnaire and evaluations.

1. Do you know the widows in your congregation? Yes = 1, No = 2.
2. Did you have a conversation with a widow in the past month about her concerns?  
Yes = 1, No = 2.
3. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation? Yes =1, No = 2.
4. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year? 0,  
None =3.
5. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows? Yes = 3,  
No=0.
6. What resources are available to widows in the congregation?  
List them: 1. Pastoral Team, 2 Small Group, 3. Religious Counseling. 4. Northern Westchester Hospice Clergy Coalition, 5.none.
7. Please rate your congregations' level of activity on caring for widows, using a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good). Circle the appropriate number: 1 =1, 2 = 0, 3 = 0,  
4 = 0, 5 = 0.
8. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow ministry? Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good): Circle the appropriate number: 1 = 1, 2=0,3=0, 4 =2,  
5 = 0.
9. Would you welcome a widow's ministry in your congregation? Yes = 3, No = 0.
10. Do you have a widow's support group in your congregation? Yes = 0, No =2.
11. Would you like more information on developing a widow's ministry in your congregation? Yes = 2, No = 1.
12. Would you use this resource in your congregation? Yes = 2, No =1.
13. Please rate the enclosed pamphlet on a scale of 1 to 5. Circle you choice: poor,  
fair, good, very good =2, excellent=1.
14. Additional Comments (Two of the three pastors returned evaluations with comments):

Pastor # One said, "On a short term basis we conducted a support group for bereavement. Over the past seven years there are 3 persons who lost their spouses through death. There are only 8 church related deaths in the past 7 years."

Pastor # Two said, "I read the booklet and found many good insights and biblical perspectives. I will definitely use some of those in our new future. Also, I come to think that there are many widows in our neighboring communities and the widows is necessary for all churches. Thank you.

**A Pastoral Care Model of Caring for Widows  
Questionnaire and Evaluation  
to District Pastors**

15. Do you know the widows in your congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
16. Did you have a conversation with a widow in the past month about her concerns?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
17. Did you provide grief counselling to a widow in the congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
18. What religious resources have you read concerning widows in the past year? \_\_\_\_\_  
or None \_\_\_ .
19. Can you use a resource that will help you in your ministry with widows? Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_.
20. What resources are available to widows in the congregation?  
List them: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ or none  
\_\_\_\_\_.
21. Please rate your congregations' level of activity on caring for widows, using a  
scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good). Circle the appropriate number: 1   2  
3   4   5.
22. How important is it for the congregation to have a widow ministry? Using a scale  
of 1 to 5 (1-not at all and 5-very good: Circle the appropriate number: 1   2   3  
4   5.
23. Would you welcome a widow's ministry in your congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
24. Do you have a widow's support group in your congregation? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.



25. Would you like more information on developing a widow's ministry in your congregation?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

26. Would you use this resource in your congregation? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

27. Please rate the enclosed pamphlet on a scale of 1 to 5. Circle your choice: (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent).

28. Additional Comments:

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## Appendix J: Bishop's Day



Metropolitan District  
Rev. Dr. Denise Smartt Sears, District Superintendent

### **Day with the Metropolitan District** **BISHOP JANE ALLEN MIDDLETON** Sunday, February 22, 2015

WELCOME:

Ms. Tiffany French

LENTEN PRAYER:

Ms. Nisha Felix

Catch me in my anxious scurrying, Lord, and hold me in this Lenten Season: Hold my feet to the fire of your grace and make me attentive to my morality that I may begin to die now to those things that keep me from living with you and my neighbors here on this earth.

**RESPONSE:**

Because of Jesus Christ, we know that God loves us and will never let us go. Our future is full of hope!

OPENING PRAYER:

Rev. Junbum Lee

INTRODUCTION OF BISHOP MIDDLETON:

Rev. Dr. Denise Smartt Sears

VIDEO PRESENTATION:

"Leadership: An Art of Possibility"

The Bishop's Time



Bishop Jane Allen Middleton

CLOSING HYMN:

"There's No Me, There's No You" (Zion Still Sings)

There's no me, there's no you without him. There's no me. There's no you without him. As we go through the day it takes a minute to pray. There's no me, there's no you without him.

It doesn't really matter how big or small we might be, God watches over all and that is why we sing. There's no me, there's no you without him. There's no me, there's no you without him.

We come from many places, many colors and many hues, but all that really matters is that God loves me and you.

There's no me, there's no you without him. There's no me, there's no you without him.

## Bishop's Day on the District 2015

### CARING FOR YOUR WHOLE BEING

*"Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass."  
They didn't ask questions. They dropped their nets and followed. Mark 1:19-20*

*Moses answered God, "But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children out of Egypt."  
"I'll be with you," God said. Exodus 3:11-12a\**

	WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT PRACTICES?	WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR?
<b>SPIRITUALLY</b> <i>While it was still night, way before dawn, he got up and went out to a secluded spot and prayed. Mark 1:35</i>		
<b>PROFESSIONALLY</b> <i>You'll remember, friends, that when I first came to you to let you in on God's master stroke, I didn't try to impress you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy. I deliberately kept it plain and simple: first Jesus and who he is; then Jesus and what he did—Jesus crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2</i>		
<b>PHYSICALLY</b> <i>Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 6:19</i>		
<b>INTELLECTUALLY</b> <i>Get wisdom—it's worth more than money; choose insight over income every time. Proverbs 16:</i>		
<b>EMOTIONALLY</b> <i>Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, "Oh, thank you, God!" I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other believers. Philemon vs 4-5</i>		

\* ALL SCRIPTURE QUOTES FROM THE MESSAGE

DISTRICT DAYS WITH BISHOP JANE ALLEN MIDDLETON, 2015

Appendix K  
Certificate UMEA Continuing Education Program

ILIFF  
— SCHOOL of THEOLOGY —  
DENVER

certifies that

*Carrie Smallwood*

has participated in the continuing education event

**Healthy Living in the Midst of Moral Dissonance**

sponsored by

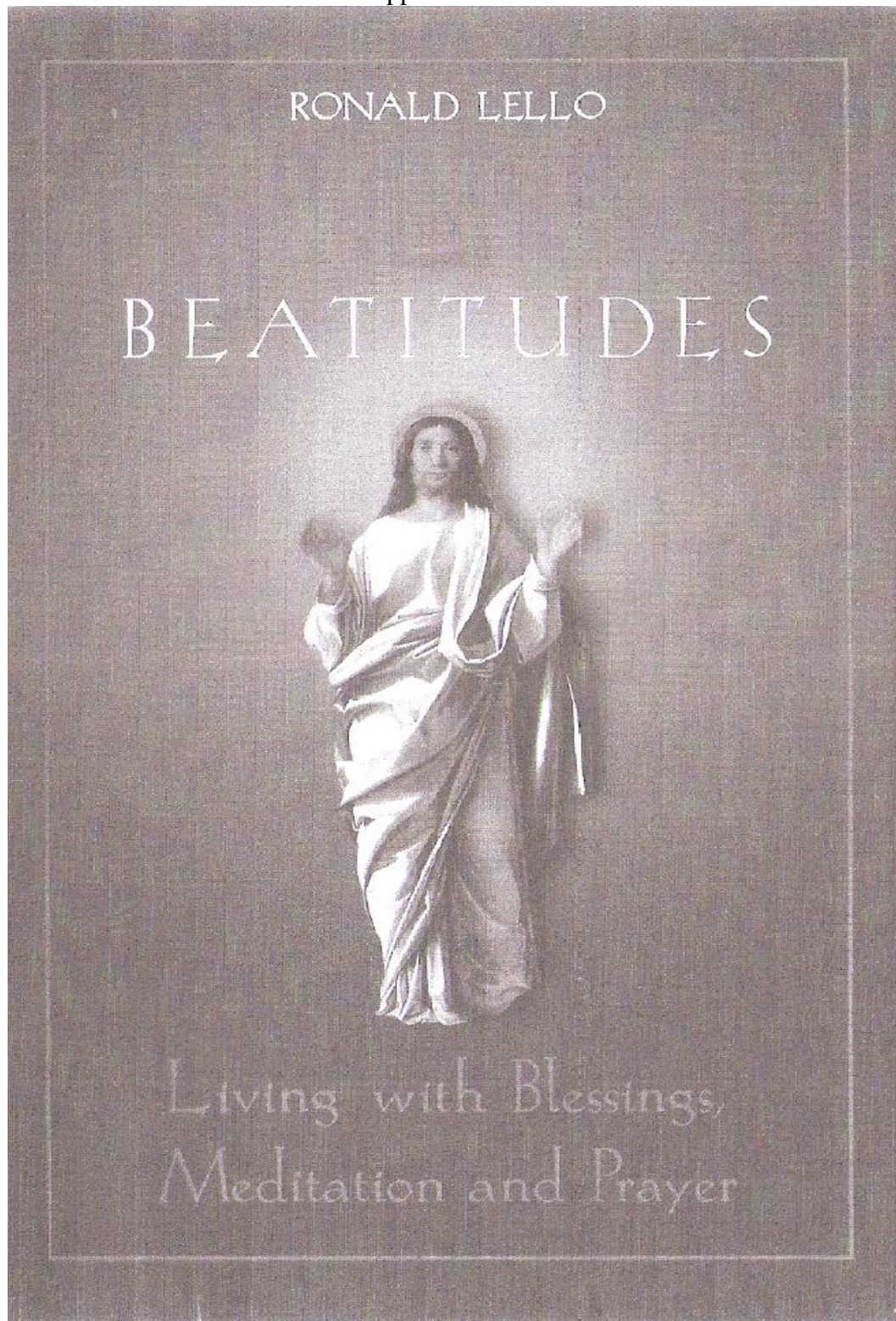
General Board of Higher Education & Ministry  
The United Methodist Church

November 2-5, 2015  
and received 1.5 CEU

Epworth by The Sea  
The Methodist Center  
St. Simons Island, Georgia

*Carmen Boca Doster*  
Carmen Boca Doster  
Registrar, Iliff School of Theology





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